

# **The Union of Regeneration: the Anti-Bolshevik Underground in Revolutionary Russia, 1917-1919**

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# **The Union of Regeneration: the Anti-Bolshevik Underground in Revolutionary Russia, 1917–1919**

**PhD Thesis**

**Benjamin Wells**

**Queen Mary, University of London, 2004**



## Abstract

The Union of Regeneration has been chosen as the main focal point of this thesis, a study of underground political organisations in revolutionary Russia who came about as a result of fragmentation of Russia's major political parties in 1917 and sought to oppose the Bolshevik takeover of power. The thesis traces the origins of the underground in the political turmoil of 1917 before detailing how each group was formed, and how a number of plans were made, most of which hinged on the extensive involvement of Allied interventionist forces, to form an anti-Bolshevik and anti-German front in the wake of the signature of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The efforts of the Union of Regeneration, the National Centre, and other groups such as the Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom are presented as a series of failures which took place mostly in 1918. By examining the reasons for each of these failures, this thesis hopes to focus not on external factors, such as the lack of Allied intervention to assist the underground groups or the machinations of reactionary forces against them, in order to reveal the fundamental failings of the underground movement as a whole. The underground lacked any organisational discipline or coherence, its ranks were easily entered on a loose, 'personal' basis and there was little unity of purpose between its members, save the removal of Soviet power. Consequently, plans made were too vague, agreements were too easily broken, and alliances were too easily ruptured. This thesis, then, hopes to demonstrate that although when considered together the anti-Bolshevik underground constituted a genuine potential threat to the Bolshevik regime, that it failed to act as one contributed greatly to it being easily marginalised by the extremes of left and right.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction: The Politics of Coalition in the Russian Revolution

Either the dictatorship (i.e., the iron rule) of the landowners and capitalists, or the dictatorship of the working class...There is no middle course. The scions of the aristocracy, intellectualists and petty gentry, badly educated on bad books, dream of the middle course...To whom did these dreams do service? Whom did they assist? Kolchak and Denikin. Those who dream of a middle course are abettors of Kolchak.<sup>1</sup>

The Union of Regeneration (UR) was one of several underground anti-Bolshevik organisations existing during the period of the Russian revolution and civil war that tried to find a 'middle course', as Lenin termed it.<sup>2</sup> In this study the UR has been chosen as the focal point of the work of the underground because of its significance as a force of coalition between left- and right-wing forces. The origins of the UR can be traced to the fragmentation of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries (PSR) and the liberal Constitutional Democrat (Kadet) Party in 1917, but the organisation can be said to have been 'born' in the spring of 1918. The UR had contact with other underground political and military groups and also acted as a kind of bridge between the so-called 'democratic' and 'White' phases of the Russian Civil War. The Omsk coup of 18 November 1918, which led to Admiral Kolchak's assumption of the role of Supreme Ruler can be seen as the point at which the hegemony of politicians over the course of events in the civil war was finally swept away and replaced by that of the military. This led to the downfall in 1919 of the UR as a coalition group, as many prominent socialist members left Russia and those members who remained concerned themselves with supporting General Denikin in South Russia. This has been seen by Soviet historians as proof that Lenin was correct in his maxim that there could be no 'middle course'.

The *raison d'être* of the UR had been to attempt to prove otherwise. Whilst it was subsequently to be seen that the White generals of 1919 lacked sufficient political sensitivity and neglected the need to appeal to the masses, focusing instead on matters of a purely military character, much the reverse can be said of the preceding

<sup>1</sup> Lenin, V. I. *Collected Works*. Vol. 29. Moscow: Progress, 1965, p. 559.

<sup>2</sup> The organisation was referred to in Russian by members as both *Soiuz vozrozhdeniia* and *Soiuz vozrozhdeniia Rossii* ('The Union for the Regeneration of Russia').

‘Democratic Counter-Revolution’.<sup>3</sup> The UR was an attempt to unify not only politicians of various colours, from the Kadets, through Popular Socialists to Socialists-Revolutionaries (SRs), but also to include a significant number of members of a military background. This was considered to be essential if a broad anti-Bolshevik and anti-German front was to be created, appealing to the masses not only on a patriotic basis but also with the clear aim of creating a Russia in which the gains of the February Revolution would be safe.

Coalition, then, is to be a theme which runs through this work. In many ways during the year 1918 the UR were working for a return to the politics of 1917. Indeed, the problems of 1917 came back to haunt the UR constantly. As the dominant theme of the Provisional Government was coalition itself, the problem of the organisation of power was one with which the UR was forced to wrestle and one which it ultimately failed to solve. The relevance of the problems of the Provisional Government to the UR and its work with other anti-Bolshevik organisations are such that an introductory overview of the high politics of 1917, and the events which led to the collapse of the February Revolution and of the Kadet and SR parties, members of which constituted the majority of the UR’s leadership, is essential.

### *The Blurring of Party Lines in 1917*

When the February Revolution swept away the autocratic regime of the Romanovs, the parties that were to be plunged into the dilemma of power had undergone years of debate and discord, especially regarding the issues of the First World War and the collapse of the Second International. The socialist parties that were significant in the provisional coalition governments, the PSR and the Mensheviks, were indeed riven as a result of the war and had splintered into a number of sub-groups. Left-SRs and Menshevik-Internationalists opposed the war outright, whereas those on the far right of both parties, including such luminaries as the Menshevik Georgii Plekhanov and the ‘grandmother of the Russian Revolution’, Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, actually supported the war. The core of both parties, centred around leaders such as

<sup>3</sup> This phrase was coined by the Menshevik Ivan Maiskii and is largely a reference to the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly, or Komuch, whose ‘People’s Army’ was defeated by the Red Army in the autumn of 1918. See Maiskii, I. *Demokraticheskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*. Moscow: Gosizdat, 1923.



Viktor Chernov (of the SRs) and Irakli Tsereteli and Fedor Dan (of the Mensheviks) was generally opposed to the war but fervently against the conclusion of a separate peace with the Central Powers. The other moderate socialist party, the Popular Socialist Party, was closest to the Right-SRs in its attitude to most issues.<sup>4</sup>

The only significant non-socialist political party after the February Revolution was the Kadet Party. The Kadets had campaigned throughout the war for a responsible ministry to lead the Imperial government's war effort, and in many ways they were the immediate beneficiaries of the revolution. Although the Chairman of the Council of Ministers (and Minister of the Interior) of the First Provisional Government was the non-party Prince L'vov, the most important member of the council was undoubtedly the Kadet leader Pavel Miliukov. Throughout 1917 Miliukov stood for a vigorous prosecution of the war, although many members on the left of his party were to drift away from his position during 1917 over the issue of collaborating with socialism, which Miliukov was firmly against.

The first sign of collaboration between socialists and liberal-bourgeois society in 1917 came in the immediate aftermath of the February Revolution. By 1 March 'at the very latest', the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies had largely unified behind the call to work with the 'Temporary Committee' of the Duma in order to ease the urgent supply problems faced by the capital.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the supply commissions of both organs were united by this date. With Order No.1, the Petrograd Soviet demonstrated to the Duma Committee that its co-operation was needed if the authority of the Committee was to go unchallenged by the working masses of Petrograd and the rank-and-file soldiers of the garrison.<sup>6</sup> However, the view that February was Russia's bourgeois revolution was consistent with Marxist ideology and this prevented the Soviet from taking power from the new government. Additionally, the Menshevik-dominated Executive Committee of the Soviet was firmly against

<sup>4</sup> The name of the Popular Socialists referred to the party's roots in the Populist movement of the late nineteenth century and in no way reflected its significance as a political force. The leader, veteran revolutionary Nikolai Chaikovskii had, along with men such as the historian V. Miakotin, formed his own Populist party in 1907, only two years after the PSR's first Party Congress. Chaikovskii's party was small, but the leader was well respected by other revolutionaries, particularly those on the right-wing of the PSR.

<sup>5</sup> Galili y Garcia, Z. *The Menshevik Leaders in the Russian Revolution: Social Realities and Political Strategies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989 (hereafter *The Menshevik Leaders*), p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> See Browder, R. and Kerensky, A. (eds.) *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961 (hereafter *The Russian Provisional Government*), Vol. II, pp. 848–849 for Order No. 1.



coalition, despite the fact that SR and Trudovik members (6 of 23 in total) were more favourable to the notion. These early coalitionists included Vladimir Mikhailovich Zenzinov, future UR affiliate and member of the five-man Directory created by the Ufa State Conference in September 1918. Such initial discussion over the question of coalition, two months before the first coalition government was formed, indicates that, as a party, the Mensheviks were much more averse to co-operating with bourgeois forces than their colleagues of a Populist background. This stance on coalition led to the Soviet granting conditional support to the Provisional Government, a cabinet formed out of the Duma Committee which contained only one socialist, the Trudovik Alexander Kerensky, on 2 March. Dual Power was born.

Kerensky was able to keep some semblance of his ties with his socialist background via those close to him in the PSR – in particular, Zenzinov, who had secretly blessed Kerensky's entry into the government. As Oliver Radkey put it, 'this influential SR leader...would be the mediator between the party and the minister' throughout 1917.<sup>7</sup> It is common practice to see Kerensky as a man who acted in complete isolation from all notion of party loyalty or discipline. Indeed it is common to see in Kerensky's behaviour a certain amount of self-serving ambition and demagoguery, embodied by Trotsky's depiction of him as 'Bonaparte Kerensky'. However, this link with other senior and respected party men which also included Abram Gots, shows that others in the party were of like-mind.<sup>8</sup> It is true that these men represented the right (or, at least the centre-right) of the party, but their support of Kerensky is significant. The PSR, unlike the Mensheviks, had a distinct 'all-Russian' orientation. The Mensheviks were self-consciously a workers' party,

<sup>7</sup> Radkey, O. *The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism: Promise and Default of the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, February to October 1917*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1958 (hereafter *Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism*), p. 146. Radkey's assertion concerning Zenzinov and Gots being important contacts for Kerensky is confirmed by the latter's memoirs: Kerensky, A, *The Kerensky Memoirs: Russia and History's Turning Point*. London: Cassell, 1966 (hereafter *The Kerensky Memoirs*). Kerensky mentions meeting with Zenzinov to discuss the mood of the Soviet in March on p. 235 and p. 240. He also mentions meeting both SRs in late August with regard to the Party Central Committee's attitude to the Third Coalition on pp. 408–409. It is clear from Chernov's memoirs that he hoped to use Gots to manipulate Kerensky. See Chernov, V. *The Great Russian Revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936 (hereafter *The Great Russian Revolution*), p. 399.

<sup>8</sup> Radkey, *Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism*, p. 146. Radkey states that as Zenzinov was the buffer between Kerensky and the party, Gots performed the same role with the Petrograd Soviet.



whereas the SRs saw as their constituency not only the peasantry, but also the urban proletariat and intelligentsia.<sup>9</sup>

This kind of almost Kadet-like *nadklassnost* (being above class – a sentiment which dominated Kadet theory and practice), is unsurprising, given that the country was in the midst of a war which had inspired, even among so-called socialists, a wave of patriotic fervour which caused many to support Russia's struggle with the Central Powers, a stand which set them apart from their Zimmerwaldist brethren. These were not minor figures. *Edinstvo* ('Unity'), the organisation of Mensheviks based around Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism, was perhaps the most 'right-wing' (in terms of pro-war orientation) of the Russian socialists. Senior SR figures were also strongly pro-war. Among these were Breshko-Breshkovskaia, as well as other notable SRs such as Andrei Argunov and Nikolai Avksent'ev. The latter, a member of the 'enthusiastically defensist' *Prizyv* group, had lived in Paris during the war and had returned to Petrograd on 8 April along with Viktor Chernov, the party's leader and chief theorist, as well as other revolutionary exiles.<sup>10</sup> Avksent'ev's fellow Parisians included a number of Popular Socialists, whose party leader, Nikolai Chaikovskii was to be a future UR leader along with Avksent'ev himself. These, Chernov excepted, were the kind of figures on the left to whom Kerensky was closest in 1917. All were to support Kerensky's governmental strategy throughout 1917, and many were to become UR members. Even before the April crisis, it was this type of socialist leadership – those of a 'populist' as opposed to Marxist background – that advocated closer co-operation between the First Provisional Government and the Soviet.<sup>11</sup>

These voices did not exist as a minority in the Soviet. The increase in the representation of soldiers, those 'peasants in uniform', had an effect on the shape of the Soviet. The Populist constituency had risen, and with it the power of the PSR. However, the SR leadership in the Soviet has been described as mediocre. Even in mid-April, by which time most significant SR leaders had returned from exile, few were willing to take up the SR cause in the Soviet. To paraphrase Radkey: Kerensky was busy in government; Chernov, the compulsive writer, was busily engaged in what

<sup>9</sup> This point is well made in Melancon, M. 'The Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs) 1917–1920,' in Acton, E. Cherniaev, V. and Rosenberg, W. (eds) *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution 1914–1921*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997 (hereafter Melancon, 'Socialist Revolutionary Party'), p. 282.

<sup>10</sup> Abraham, R. *Alexander Kerensky: The First Love of the Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987 (hereafter *Kerensky*), p. 169.



Radkey (in somewhat derogatory fashion) describes as ‘literary activity’ prior to his own ministerial embroilment; Avksent’ev concentrated on his position as Chairman of the Peasants’ Soviet; and Zenzinov concentrated on party organisational matters and management of the principal SR organ, *Delo naroda*.<sup>12</sup> Therefore:

The field was left to A.R. Gotz and his two lieutenants, Boldyrev and Livshits, who were hopelessly outclassed in point of intellect, personality, forensic ability, and scent for manuevre by that galaxy of Menshevik leaders in which Tsereteli, Dan, and Chkheidze were the brightest luminaries.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the Petrograd Soviet came to be dominated in March by the Mensheviks, despite their numerical inferiority, in terms of mass support, to the PSR. In March the Mensheviks underwent a transformation which was to affect the policy and action of both the party and of ‘revolutionary democracy’ as a whole right up to the Bolshevik assumption of power. During that month disagreements between the Soviet and the Provisional Government over the issue of the continuation of the war had threatened open confrontation between the two rival centres of power. Until mid-March Nikolai Sukhanov and other prominent internationalists in the party had advocated immediate peace initiatives, even positing this as a way of strengthening the front.<sup>14</sup> After the return to Petrograd of Irakli Tsereteli, a leading ‘Siberian Zimmerwaldist’ with personal links with Gots and Fedor Dan as a result of their exile in parts of Siberia around Irkutsk, the Soviet was to unite and clarify its position around ‘Revolutionary Defencism’, which came from the basic theories about the war of the Siberian Zimmerwaldists.<sup>15</sup> This idea – to continue with the war, while attempting to cajole the Allies into a revision of war aims via a diplomatic offensive as well as by convening an International Socialist Peace Conference – became the policy of the Soviet. The rallying cry was of peace ‘without annexations or indemnities’.

This was enough to lay the groundwork for six months of SR and Menshevik collaboration in the Soviet, with the SR delegates providing Tsereteli and Dan with

<sup>11</sup> Galili, *The Menshevik Leaders*, p. 142.

<sup>12</sup> Radkey, *Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism*, p. 136.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>14</sup> Sukhanov, N. *The Russian Revolution 1917: Eyewitness Account*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955 (hereafter Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution*), Vol. I, p. 241.

<sup>15</sup> Essentially, Siberian Zimmerwaldism was a strain of Zimmerwaldist pacifism that found the notion of war for national defence acceptable, if at the same time international peace efforts were vigorously maintained as part of an attempt at a general armistice. See Wade, R. ‘Irakli Tsereteli and Siberian



the overwhelming support they occasionally lacked in their own party. This unity was partly due to Tsereteli's oratorical skills and to his personal magnetism, but was also due to the fact that his formula was sufficiently internationalist to win over those who, like Dan, were slightly to his left. An important factor, though, was the strength of the right-wing of the PSR. According to Radkey, for those SRs mentioned above, the majority of differences with the Mensheviks – over the pace of the revolution, for instance – had disappeared. With Avksent'ev considering the February Revolution to have been a patriotic movement, 'The right wing of the party...had in effect embraced the Menshevik theory of revolution, finding in the "defensist" credo with its emphasis on class collaboration the surrogate for their burnt-out faith in social revolution.'<sup>16</sup>

One might wonder why the right-wing of the party had such influence, when in fact the mass of the party leadership was considerably to the left of the position occupied by Gots, Zenzinov, Avksent'ev *et al.* There are a few pointers as to why this was the case. One significant reason was that they were there first. Zenzinov was the first leader of the PSR in Petrograd during the turmoil of early March, whereas the Party Leader, Viktor Chernov, did not return from exile until April. In addition, Radkey states that these figures, including Breshko-Breshkovskaia and Argunov, were distinguished by past service to the party.<sup>17</sup> Finally, one must look at the actions of Chernov. For whatever reason, Chernov did not allow past splits with these colleagues to continue into 1917 (although they soon reappeared.) Chernov allied himself with his ex-opponents, supporting revolutionary defensism and, according to Michael Melancon, 'strengthening the party's post-February reformist tilt.'<sup>18</sup> This shift to the right had been an ongoing process in the PSR ever since the scandal surrounding the Azef affair had caused many SRs (including Avksent'ev and Zenzinov) to argue for an abandonment of terrorism and the pursuit of purely legal

Zimmerwaldism', *Journal of Modern History* Vol. 39 (1967), pp. 425–431; Galili, Z and Garcia, R, 'The Origins of Revolutionary Defensism', *Slavic Review* Vol. 41 (1982), pp. 454–476.

<sup>16</sup> Radkey, *Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism*, p. 166.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 171. Both were long-serving Central Committee members, and Breshko-Breshkovskaia was in fact instrumental in founding the unified party in 1901.

<sup>18</sup> Melancon, M. 'Chernov', in Acton, E. Cherniaev, V. and Rosenberg, W. (eds) *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution* (hereafter Melancon, 'Chernov'), p. 133. Chernov's tactics and passivity in 1917 are indeed a subject of some interest. His decision not to break with other populist colleagues can be explained by his avowed anti-factionalism (somewhat ironic considering the factional nature of his party), as shown by his call in 1901 for the party to follow the slogan 'Irreconcilably against irreconcilability.' Another explanation may be his view of the nature of the revolution itself – that its real purpose was merely to replace violent struggle with peaceful, theoretical, intellectual battles. See Cross, T. 'Purposes of Revolution: Chernov and 1917', *Russian Review* Vol. 26 (1967), p. 355–357.



tactics.<sup>19</sup> The war and the revolution only served to accentuate splits that already existed within a party prone to factionalism from birth. Chernov himself claims that the rapid growth of the party at the time, the influx of the 'March SRs', meant that the party was guided now more by the 'motley, many-headed street', impressed by the 'dictatorial airs' of Kerensky.<sup>20</sup> Melancon's assessment of the May party congress is also interesting. With 40 per cent of delegates voting for resolutions proposed by left-wing party members, the centre ground, belonging to Chernov, remained closer to the right-wing of Avksent'ev, Argunov and their associates. This, Melancon states, meant that, 'A core of party intellectuals had, in effect, taken upon themselves the task of guiding the party and the nation along an evolutionary path.'<sup>21</sup> However, if one takes Radkey's point about the importance of past service in deciding who had authority in the party, one might also form a picture of the party being guided along this path not by its intellectual core but by its *elders*, distanced from a large section of their followers not just by their attitude to the war and the nature of the revolution in general, but by their age and experience. These veterans – now, of sorts, 'socialist *evolutionaries*' – had far more in common with the Menshevism of Tsereteli than they had with the future Left-SRs, just as the Left SRs themselves had far more in common with the Bolshevism of Lenin. This collaboration between the SRs and the Mensheviks, based on Tsereteli's formulations, provided the February Revolution with its first of many governmental crises.

The 'April Days' came as a result of the conflict between the Soviet's peace policy and the annexationist tendencies of the Foreign Minister, Miliukov.<sup>22</sup> The majority of the mass demonstrations called for Miliukov's resignation, and, according to Kerensky, 'revealed the precarious nature of the government's position'.<sup>23</sup> Then, as Miliukov later put it, 'From diplomacy, the argument switched to domestic policy'.<sup>24</sup> This led those on the left of the Provisional Government to favour the formation of a coalition government including representatives of the Soviet. By 21 April, Kerensky,

<sup>19</sup> Hildermeier, M. 'Nepopulism and Modernization: The Debate on Theory and Tactics in the Socialist Revolutionary Party, 1905–14', *The Russian Review* Vol. 43 (1975), pp. 466–467.

<sup>20</sup> Chernov, *The Great Russian Revolution*, pp. 393–395.

<sup>21</sup> Melancon, 'Socialist Revolutionary Party,' p. 285.

<sup>22</sup> For the text of the infamous 'Miliukov Note', which sparked of the April demonstrations, see Browder and Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government*, Vol. II, p. 1098.

<sup>23</sup> Kerensky, *The Kerensky Memoirs*, p. 245.

<sup>24</sup> Miliukov, P. *Political Memoirs 1905–1917*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967 (hereafter *Political Memoirs*), p. 450.



N. V. Nekrasov (a left-Kadet) and M. I. Tereshchenko, (a non-party figure who was then Minister of Finance), were arguing for a coalition government as a way out of this crisis. Other Kadet Central Committee members, such as Nabokov and Vinaver, were by this time sympathetic to their cause.<sup>25</sup>

The crisis showed that, just as all other parties in Russia, the Kadet party was by no means homogeneous. And, again as with the other parties, this lack of unity had its roots in the pre-war 'Constitutional Monarchy' period of Russian history. The left, or 'conciliationist,' wing of the party (led by Nekrasov, Nikolai Astrov and M. L. Mandel'shtam) had long advocated the strengthening of ties with so-called 'living social forces' among the proletariat and the peasantry, in opposition to the view of those on the right of the party such as Maklakov who were more traditional and bourgeois in approach.<sup>26</sup> As with the PSR, this division had existed since before even the 1905 revolution.<sup>27</sup> By 1917, this division was serious enough for Nekrasov to act in consort with Kerensky and Tereshchenko and even for him to approve of the removal of his own party leader from his governmental post.<sup>28</sup> Soon the call for coalition was echoed by the then Minister-President, Prince G. E. L'vov.<sup>29</sup>

At this point the official policy of the Soviet was against coalition with the government. Most deputies held the viewpoint that it should merely exercise 'control' over the executive. Indeed, the April Days were ended by a new document issued by the Soviet promising more 'control' over foreign policy. However, this did not end the crisis. The new document virtually ensured that A. I. Guchkov, the Minister for War, would resign. Additionally, those SRs involved in high policy-making circles were under pressure to call for a coalition government. Tsereteli was the Menshevik

<sup>25</sup> Nekrasov formed an alliance with Kerensky and Tereshchenko at the end of March, and had convinced other Central Committee members of his point of view by the Central Committee meeting of April 23. Rosenberg, W. *Liberals in the Russian Revolution: The Constitutional Democrat Party 1917-1921*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974 (hereafter *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*), p. 103, p. 110.

<sup>26</sup> Rosenberg, William. 'The Constitutional Democrats (Kadets),' in Acton, E. Cherniaev, V. and Rosenberg, W. (eds) *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution* (hereafter Rosenberg, 'The Constitutional Democrats'), p. 257.

<sup>27</sup> Maklakov had consistently differed with Miliukov in his 'liberalism'. Rather than being a radical who wished to see revolutionary change, Maklakov had long seen the role of the liberals as being the promotion of peaceful evolution. Karpovich, M. 'Two Types of Russian Liberalism: Miliukov and Maklakov', in Simmons, E. J. (ed.) *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955, pp. 134-136.

<sup>28</sup> On Nekrasov's individualism and qualities as a go-between, see Miliukov, *Political Memoirs*, p. 459.

<sup>29</sup> Miliukov believed that L'vov, as well as Kerensky and Tereshchenko, was keen on securing his resignation for the sake of coalition from April 21. Miliukov, *Political Memoirs*, pp. 449-453.



leader who was most convinced of the possibility of working within the government. By the end of March, he had concluded that, 'the soviet should strive toward co-operation with these moderate, "responsible" segments of the propertied and educated classes', and at the Conference of Soviets on 31 March spoke of Dual Power as an 'agreement with the bourgeoisie' for the purposes of political reconstruction, and, while emphasising the role of the Soviet, stressed the need for an 'all-national government' of the 'vital forces in the country'.<sup>30</sup> The similarity between this view and the concept of 'living social forces' of left-liberals such as Nekrasov is striking.

However, the notion of coalition was still unpalatable to the vast majority of Mensheviks, notably to Dan. On 28 April the Executive Committee of the Soviet voted 24:22 against coalition, with the SRs constituting the bulk of the 'yes' vote.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, however, the principle of coalition was gaining support on all sides. Tsereteli himself wrote of an encounter with the Procurator of the Holy Synod, V.N. L'vov, who told him of his enthusiasm for a new government with socialist ministers. At this point, 'it became apparent that Guchkov and Miliukov were completely isolated in the government'.<sup>32</sup> It may also have been at this point that Tsereteli decided that coalition with the bourgeois government was the way forward. As it was, with Miliukov resigning on 2 May, the way was clear for coalition. By this time Tsereteli had convinced Dan that this was the only way to avoid prolonging the crisis.<sup>33</sup> According to Tsereteli's sole biographer, he never thought that the formation of a purely soviet government was an alternative course of action.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, despite receiving a telegram from their supposed party leader, Iulii Martov, to the effect that participation in a coalition government was 'unacceptable', the Menshevik leaders in Petrograd,

<sup>30</sup> Galili y Garcia, *The Menshevik Leaders*, p. 150.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 169–171. The Party Organisational Committee had decided on April 24th that socialists entering the government would be 'inexpedient'. For the resolution see Galili, Z. and Nenarokov, A. (eds) *Mensheviki v 1917 gody: tom 1. Ot ianvaria do iul'skikh sobitii*. Moscow: IPA, 1994 (hereafter *Mensheviki*) p. 207.

<sup>32</sup> Tsereteli, I. 'Reminiscences of the February Revolution – The April Crisis,' in von Mohrenschildt, D. *The Russian Revolution of 1917: Contemporary Accounts*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 153–154.

<sup>33</sup> Dan made an announcement cautiously supporting the coalition on 5 May, reproduced in Galili and Nenarokov, *Mensheviki*, pp. 221–222.

<sup>34</sup> Roobol, W. H. *Tsereteli – a Democrat in the Russian Revolution*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976 (hereafter *Tsereteli*), p. 120.

together with their willing followers in the PSR leadership, decided to enter the first coalition government.<sup>35</sup>

The approval of the first coalition by the parties of the Soviet was dependent upon its composition. The coalition cabinet was mainly selected by a series of behind the scenes deals by the triumvirate of Kerensky, Nekrasov and Tereshchenko and the Presidium of the Soviet Executive Committee – pejoratively termed the ‘Star Chamber’ by Sukhanov.<sup>36</sup> In the end, the socialist representation was rather poor, with the majority of leading Mensheviks opting, for their own personal reasons, not to accept a portfolio. Of the leading party luminaries, only Tsereteli took a ministerial position, that of the virtually meaningless Posts and Telegraphs. In fact, his presence in the Cabinet was largely symbolic, and he had little in the way of governmental work. His job was to act as a formal liaison between the Cabinet and the Soviet. This is not to underestimate his influence at this time. Tsereteli’s unique position of respect and authority in both camps gave him great scope for action, and there is no doubt that he strove to have as great an impact on the business of government as possible, particularly with regard to the policy on the war.<sup>37</sup> This position led Chernov to refer to him at this time as, ‘Minister for General Affairs’.<sup>38</sup>

Key appointments were of course Agriculture, Foreign Affairs and War, as the land question and the war were the most important issues that the government needed to address. Chernov’s name was bandied about for both Agriculture and Foreign Affairs. It was Chernov who had mounted a particularly strong campaign in the press against ‘Miliukov-Dardanellskii’ and who was seen as a strong candidate, by those on the left, to fill the post left vacant by Miliukov’s departure. Kadets and Popular Socialists were against his entering the government at all, though, and Avksent’ev was considered to be a possible right-wing alternative SR Minister of Agriculture. Symbolically, of course, it was advantageous to have a leading SR in this post. However, it seems that the Star Chamber was determined that the job should be Chernov’s, with the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs being entrusted to the

<sup>35</sup> Getzler, I. ‘Martov’, in Acton, E. Cherniaev, V. and Rosenberg, W. (eds) *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution*, p. 161.

<sup>36</sup> The group was centred around Tsereteli, Dan and Gots. Other important SRs, such as Chernov and Avksent’ev, attended occasionally.

<sup>37</sup> Miliukov described Tsereteli as ‘a remarkable specialist on interparty technique, an inexhaustible inventor of verbal formulas extricating his hero and his party from the most impossible situations’. Miliukov, *Political Memoirs*, p. 458.

<sup>38</sup> Roobol, *Tsereteli*, p. 124.



politically inexperienced Tereshchenko, who was something of an unknown quantity to say the least.<sup>39</sup> The power of the Star Chamber may have been important in securing Agriculture for the PSR leader, but this appears to have been something of a trade-off with the triumvirate; as Richard Abraham put it, at least this kept Chernov busy and out of Foreign Affairs.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the socialists entering the Cabinet were rather a mixed bag: Tsereteli's and Chernov's were undoubtedly important appointments, but of the others, Kerensky was a socialist in name only, while Skobolev (the Menshevik Minister of Labour) and Peshchekhonov (the Popular Socialist Minister of Supply) were rather token appointments with little significance. It is not without reason that Miliukov later judged these men to have been, in sum, 'a rather motley socialist group'.<sup>41</sup>

While it is common to focus on the policy failures of the First Coalition (in particular its failures with agricultural and industrial policy, with the peace policy and the Constituent Assembly) as a means of explaining its decline in popularity, it is appropriate here to view matters from a different stance. These policy failures demonstrate, among other things, the gulf between the bourgeois members of the government and their socialist colleagues. Even the left-Kadets, including Nekrasov, had no intention of allowing the parties of the Soviet to address the aspirations of the masses. Whilst it is perhaps true that the parties of the Soviet should have been more assertive, it is still important to understand the political situation in which the SRs and Mensheviks found themselves. After all, even their support for a new offensive did not prevent the estrangement of the Kadets from the socialists. Despite the wishes of men such as Nekrasov, Astrova and N. M. Kishkin, the Kadets' Ninth Party Congress, held in the aftermath of the July Days, maintained the shift to the right that had been effectively occurring since February.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, the resignation of the Kadet ministers from the government at the beginning of July must be taken to be a signal of their general disenchantment with the policies of the left rather than simply being due to their opposition to Ukrainian autonomy. The July Days also clearly failed to cause any change in Kadet thinking, as is clear from the Kadet campaign against Chernov of

<sup>39</sup> Radkey, *Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism*, pp. 174–175.

<sup>40</sup> Abraham, *Kerensky*, p. 189.

<sup>41</sup> Miliukov, *Political Memoirs*, p. 459.

<sup>42</sup> Rosenberg, 'The Constitutional Democrats', p. 260.



mid-July,<sup>43</sup> and by Miliukov's insistence in negotiations over the new coalition that ministers should not be accountable to any organ or committee.<sup>44</sup>

Those on the right of the Kadet Party had become further estranged from those on the left during May, June and July. Nekrasov had even formed a new organisation, the 'Union of Evolutionary Socialism', which aimed at creating more unity between left-liberals and moderate socialists. Ties with the Kadet Party were not broken, but it is clear that the conciliationist wing of the party were as close to Kerensky as they were to Miliukov. The party leader, a master of alliance-forming and accommodation in the days of the 'Progressive Bloc' of the Fourth Duma, was now at the head of a more galvanized and single-minded anti-Soviet right wing.<sup>45</sup> The Kadet Central Committee was thus split on the issue of cooperation with socialists.<sup>46</sup> As Russian society was becoming increasingly polarized, with the right wing becoming more overtly counter-revolutionary in the summer, the parties of the moderate left who were attached to the coalitionist centre of Kerensky, Tereshchenko and Nekrasov were becoming more distanced from the radicalised masses.

The Mensheviks had declined in popularity since the formation of the coalition, as was shown by their declining share of the vote in District Duma elections between May and September, as well as by the events of July.<sup>47</sup> However, Dan remained confident of worker support and the Mensheviks as a whole did not change their strategy,<sup>48</sup> despite the fact that Tsereteli, the only member of the governmental inner circle not to be a freemason, was tiring of the dealings of the masonic 'troika' of Kerensky, Tereshchenko and Nekrasov.<sup>49</sup> It appears that Kerensky and his allies, in

<sup>43</sup> Radkey, *Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism*, p. 296.

<sup>44</sup> Roobol, *Tsereteli*, p. 158.

<sup>45</sup> Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, p. 151.

<sup>46</sup> This is evident from a Central Committee meeting of 11 August. Those on the right of the committee, such as Tyrkova and Protopopov, attacked the moderate socialists, while future UR members Astrov and Shchepkin spoke of the need to work together with them. For the minutes of the meeting see *Protokoly Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Konstitutsionno-Demokraticheskoi Partii 1915-1920 gg.* Moscow: Rospen, 1998 (hereafter *Protokoly Ts. K. K-D Partii*), pp. 384-388.

<sup>47</sup> Galili y Garcia, *The Menshevik Leaders*, pp. 294-299. This decline was initially due to apathy amongst the voters and later to the increasing success of the Bolsheviks. See Rosenberg, W. 'The Russian Municipal Duma Elections of 1917: A Preliminary Computation of Returns', *Soviet Studies* Vol. 21 (1969-70), pp. 158-162.

<sup>48</sup> Galili y Garcia, *The Menshevik Leaders*, pp. 312-313.

<sup>49</sup> Abraham, *Kerensky*, p. 228. On the issue of political freemasonry in the revolution see Aronson, G. 'Les Francs-maçons et la Revolution russe', *Contrat Social* Vol. 7 (1963), No. 5, pp. 259-265; No. 6, pp. 331-337; Katkov, G. *Russia 1917: The February Revolution*. London: Longman, 1967; Norton, B. T. 'Russian Political Freemasonry and the February Revolution of 1917', *International Review of Social History* Vol. 28 (1983), No.2, pp. 240-258; Smith, N. 'The Role of Russian Freemasonry in the February Revolution: Another Scrap of Evidence', *Slavic Review* Vol. 27 (1968), pp. 604-608; Smith,



this atmosphere of left-right conflict, had quite a free hand in drawing up the Second Coalition's cabinet, in which Tsereteli declined a place. Radkey hints at there also being a possible masonic link here, in that Avksent'ev, 'who they were grooming for high office', and who was also a French mason, became the new Minister of the Interior.<sup>50</sup> Again, Radkey blames the right-wing of the PSR in preventing Chernov, who remained in his post, from granting sufficient power to Land Committees: 'the instructions inciting the land committees to action emanated from the SR Ministry of Agriculture and the police power restraining the from action was wielded by the SR Ministry of the Interior'.<sup>51</sup> Or as Chernov himself put it, 'The leading figures in the party sacrificed Chernov's policy to the coalition.'<sup>52</sup> The stagnation that characterised the Second Coalition can be seen as a result of the closeness of these new SR ministers, who also included Lebedev and Boris Savinkov (Kerensky's new Deputy as minister for War), to Kerensky's 'troika', and the willingness of the SRs to put off effective legislation until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>53</sup>

At this point, with Tsereteli fading somewhat from the limelight, the only Menshevik pushing for a change in the form of government was Iulii Martov who, since the July Days (but only *since* then) had been urging the formation of a new 'democratic' government based on the parties of the Soviet.<sup>54</sup> This was surely the only alternative to coalition, other than that provided by the Bolsheviks in October, but seemed to flout traditional Menshevik doctrine about historical stages. The Mensheviks had seen the February Revolution as bourgeois, not socialist in character, and it had been difficult even for Tsereteli to enter the government in May. Israel Getzler, Martov's biographer, provides an explanation of this change. Martov no longer believed that the Russian bourgeoisie could accomplish a bourgeois revolution.

N. 'Political Freemasonry in Russia, 1906-18: A Discussion of the Sources', *Russian Review* Vol. 44 (1985), No. 2, pp. 157-171; Smith, N. and Norton, B. T. 'The Constitution of Russian Political Freemasonry (1912)', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* Vol. 34 (1986), pp. 498-517.

<sup>50</sup> Radkey, *Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism*, p. 303.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 327.

<sup>52</sup> Chernov, *Great Russian Revolution*, p. 396.

<sup>53</sup> This group of three was blamed by the Kadet Nabokov for the 'weakness, duplicity, unscrupulousness and fruitlessness' of the Second Coalition. Of course, Nabokov was criticising the government from the kind of standpoint that demanded firm decision making and rallied around General Kornilov in August. See Medlin, V. and Parsons, S. (eds) *V. D. Nabokov and the Russian Provisional Government*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976 (hereafter *Nabokov*), pp. 94-95.

<sup>54</sup> Martov introduced a resolution to this effect at a meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets on 17 July. This resolution is reproduced in Ascher, A. (ed.) *The Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1976, pp. 102-103.



They were, in Martov's view, becoming counter-revolutionary.<sup>55</sup> The possibility of a government comprised of representatives of the Soviet, the co-operatives, city dumas and zemstvos (that is, of Soviet and non-Soviet democratic Russian organisations) was mooted, and a new programme known as the 'Programme of 14 August', was worked out by these groups, with the aim of addressing the concerns of the masses over the war and the economy. At the Moscow State Conference, on 19 August, Chkheidze read out a new programme of economic regulation.<sup>56</sup> However, Chkheidze, Kerensky's 'old comrade, friend and Masonic brother' was acting partly to help the embattled Minister-President by calling for no change to the government's policies on the war or the land until the meeting of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>57</sup> Once again, personal ties were as significant as party affiliations and policies, as they had been so often since February – a key point in understanding the high politics of 1917. Just as the moderate left was pushing in one direction, though, the bourgeoisie was moving in quite another, towards support of General Kornilov, who became the star of the conference.

The Kornilov Affair put an end to the prospect of stable and active coalition government in Russia in 1917. With the commander-in-chief's alleged coup causing the end of the second coalition, again with the resignation of Kadet ministers, the country was governed by an emergency 'Directory'. Meanwhile, in early September, the PSR began to pull itself apart. A number of editorials and articles written by Chernov and published on 3 and 4 September attacking the government and Kerensky drew the fire of the right wing of the party and led to a showdown between Chernov and Avksent'ev at a party Central Committee meeting on September 6th.<sup>58</sup> Effectively the party was splitting not into two, but into three. The Left-SRs were now very close to the Bolsheviks. But perhaps an equally significant break was between those around Chernov who broke with Kerensky and wanted coalition only if the Kadets were excluded, and those around Avksent'ev who still believed in the cause of a broad-based coalition at all costs.

<sup>55</sup> Getzler, I. *Martov: A Political Biography of a Russian Social Democrat*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967 (hereafter *Martov*), pp. 155–157.

<sup>56</sup> The resolution is reproduced in Browder and Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government*, Vol. 3, pp. 1480–1488.

<sup>57</sup> Abraham, *Kerensky*, p. 261.

<sup>58</sup> Radkey, *Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism*, pp. 398–412.

This issue was to be decided by the Democratic Conference, which met between 14 and 22 September. The intention was clearly to gain the approval of Russian democratic forces for a new coalition. The invitation to the conference was issued in the names of the Chairman of the Workers' Soldiers' Soviet and that of the Peasants' Soviet – none other than Chkheidze and Avksent'ev, two men notable for their personal ties to Kerensky.<sup>59</sup> The PSR was divided between Chernov and Avksent'ev (excluding the Left-SRs, by now virtually a separate party), the Mensheviks between Tsereteli and Martov. In fact, it was Martov who had recovered much of his lost ground and commanded the majority of the support of the Menshevik faction of the conference. Tsereteli, together with Avksent'ev and Gots, tried to muster support for a broad coalition to include the Kadets, but the splits in their own party factions were mirrored in the conference as a whole. A narrow vote in favour of coalition was amended by further resolutions to exclude those implicated in the Kornilov affair and then to exclude the Kadets as a party. After these amendments were approved by the conference, the newly amended pro-coalition formula was soundly defeated. The conference thus ended in a *débâcle* which, according to Chernov, signalled, 'the complete bankruptcy of revolutionary democracy'.<sup>60</sup> It also ensured that Kerensky's Third Coalition, and the Council of the Republic (or Pre-parliament) called to give it political backing, were based on foundations so shaky that they would put up no resistance to the Bolsheviks the following month.

The Kornilov affair and the formation of the Third Coalition had an equally divisive effect upon the Kadet Party. Miliukov had already somewhat 'lost' his party over the April Crisis and the issue of coalition. Now, with him having allegedly supported a dictatorship, Kerensky met with Kadet Central Committee members Nabokov and Vinaver concerning the formation of the new government. Kerensky insisted that Miliukov relinquish his posts as party leader and editor of the party's main organ *Rech*. Also, Nekrasov accompanied the non-party Tereshchenko to talks with members of the PSR and the Mensheviks on the subject of the new cabinet.<sup>61</sup> Miliukov was forced to leave for the Crimea, from where he did not return until

<sup>59</sup> The text of the invitation is reproduced in Browder and Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government*, Vol. 3, pp. 1671–1672. An edited version of the conference's debates on the issue of coalition is on pp. 1672–1687.

<sup>60</sup> Getzler, *Martov*, p. 159.

<sup>61</sup> Kerensky, *The Kerensky Memoirs*, pp. 406–407.



immediately before the Bolshevik takeover.<sup>62</sup> In the end, a total of five Kadets defied the wishes of their 'leader' and joined the new cabinet: Kartashov, Kishkin, Konovalov, Smirnov and Tret'iakov.<sup>63</sup> Kadet *nadklassnost* had been accompanied by a distinct *nadpartiinnost*, with many senior members behaving more as individuals than as party men.

Tsereteli, having lost much of his influence, left for his native Georgia on 5 October, and the only socialists remaining who supported the Third Coalition were right-SRs. Many of these were to be instrumental in the formation and activity of the UR. Despite, or perhaps because of, Martov's ascendancy in the party during September, Mensheviks as a whole were unable to have an effect on the course of the high political events or to prevent the pro-coalition group from 'foisting another Kerensky government on "revolutionary Russia"'.<sup>64</sup> However, Kerensky also made it very difficult for an all-socialist government to form, saying that he would hand over power peacefully to such a government, in which he would not participate, but that the conference presidium must reply within three days. This was judged by Kerensky to be enough to force the SRs and Mensheviks to 'capitulate'.<sup>65</sup> Kerensky, then, was sufficiently confident in the strength of his own position that he was quite willing to act to prevent the formation of an all-socialist government. Thus, while support for not only Kerensky, but even those to his left, the SRs and Mensheviks, was withering away, Kerensky seemed to hold the principle of coalition (with himself at the head) above all other considerations. This misplaced confidence affected those around him in the machinery of government. The Council of Elders of the Council of the Republic, joined by as far-right a figure as Nabokov (who felt that the support of authority was paramount) was chaired by Avksent'ev, and contained Popular Socialists Peshchekhnov and Chaikovskii. Of Avksent'ev, Nabokov wrote, 'As chairman of the council he behaved unimpeachably, and was both polite and pleasant in his personal relations. For all that, he was the very last whom one would call an outstanding and strong personality, capable of winning the respect of others and persuading them to follow him.'<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Stockdale, M. *Paul Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia, 1880-1918*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 261.

<sup>63</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, A. *From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk*. London: Macmillan, 1919, p. 230.

<sup>64</sup> Getzler, *Martov*, p. 159.

<sup>65</sup> Kerensky, A. *The Kerensky Memoirs*, p. 417.

<sup>66</sup> Medlin and Parsons, *Nabokov*, pp. 151-152.



Avksent'ev's membership of the council affected his relations with those close to him in the PSR. With the centre ground firmly behind Chernov, who had clearly set his stall out to criticise the coalition government from without, the new Minister for Agriculture, Maslov, attempted some new emergency agrarian reform. This stimulated a flurry of SR activity, aimed at spurring the Council of the Republic into action. Men such as Gots and the Menshevik Dan, who had now returned to a position close to that of his great friend (and brother-in-law) Martov, saw the need by mid-October to act swiftly to avoid a complete Bolshevik take-over. The Council approved a three-point Dan resolution on immediate peace talks, the transfer of all gentry land to land committees, and the prompt convocation of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>67</sup> On 24 October, Dan and Gots accompanied Avksent'ev on a visit to Kerensky and spoke of the urgency of radical measure to placate the masses. However, Avksent'ev did not join their call and instead tried to moderate their words. This made it easier for Kerensky to ignore them. It was rather too late, of course. Dan, Gots and men of their standing should have acted with more determination at the Democratic Conference. This event was significant, though, as it shows why Gots became estranged from Avksent'ev and explains the detachment of the far right-wing of the SRs from the centre of the party.<sup>68</sup> It also explains why Gots would not become involved in the UR. Avksent'ev, Zenzinov and Chaikovskii, who became leaders of the UR, all supported Kerensky until the bitter end.

After October the divisions within the main parties were even clearer. The PSR became temporarily reunited around Chernov, as he decided to fight the Bolshevik take-over in support of Kerensky. This, of course, signalled the final break with the left of the party. The Left-SRs were expelled for breaking party discipline, held a separate congress which formed the new, separate party, and joined Sovnarkom in December.<sup>69</sup> The SRs proper, meanwhile, became involved in what was effectively the first underground anti-Bolshevik organisation, the Committee to Save the Fatherland and the Revolution, which Radkey judges to have been a group of SRs (around Avksent'ev and Gots) who allied themselves with armed forces which would have been beyond their control had they succeeded in putting an end the October

<sup>67</sup> Galili y Garcia, *The Menshevik Leaders*, p. 391.

<sup>68</sup> Radkey, *Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism*, p. 450.

<sup>69</sup> Melancon, 'Socialist Revolutionary Party', p. 287.



Revolution.<sup>70</sup> Gots, Chernov and Avksent'ev also briefly attempted to create an SR government at the military headquarters (Stavka) of Moglev.<sup>71</sup> The Kadets were also involved with the committee, with those on the left of the party willing to work with 'moderate socialists' (as Kadets saw them), although the centre and right of the party, legal minded as ever, saw the committee as another attempt to usurp the legitimate authority of the Provisional Government.<sup>72</sup> Some minor members of the government, who had been briefly interned in the Peter and Paul Fortress in October, upon their release began to meet as an underground remnant of the fallen regime and in fact it was to this group of mainly former deputy ministers that Kerensky communicated his resignation.<sup>73</sup> Vladimir Brovkin suggests that the continuation of this willingness to act in consort with the military, then as well as later in 1918 (which of course was a central feature of the UR), 'was a source of friction between the Mensheviks and the SRs in those early days and eventually it would lead to a break between the two allied parties'.<sup>74</sup> Not that the Mensheviks spoke with one voice. Dan may have become closer again to Martov, the party returning to the latter's grip, particularly after October, but the Defencists around Plekhanov's *Edinstvo* and Potresov's *Den* ('The Day') 'virtually declared war' on the central committee,<sup>75</sup> and the Extraordinary Congress of the party at the end of November saw the party 'deeply divided on all major issues.'<sup>76</sup>

The ravaging effects of the failed coalition experiment had clearly affected the Mensheviks just as it had the Kadets and the SRs. The issue of power was the reason for the detachment, if not formal separation, of the right wings of the SR and Menshevik parties and also for the fragmentation of the Kadet party. These fissures, though, had existed within the parties since 1905. The issue of struggle with the Bolsheviks, one which was clearly emotive for many Mensheviks, who until 1917 had

<sup>70</sup> Radkey, O. *The Sickle Under the Hammer: Russian Socialist Revolutionaries in the First Months of Soviet Rule*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963 (hereafter *The Sickle Under the Hammer*), p. 61.

<sup>71</sup> Chamberlin, W. *The Russian Revolution, 1917–1921*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987 (hereafter *Russian Revolution*), Vol. 1, p. 346.

<sup>72</sup> Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, p. 269.

<sup>73</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1, p. 354.

<sup>74</sup> Brovkin, V. *The Mensheviks After October: Socialist Opposition and the Rise of the Bolshevik Dictatorship*. Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1987 (hereafter *The Mensheviks After October*), p. 20.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 39. The debates at the congress, which were lengthy and took place over eight days, are available in Galili, Z. and Nenarokov, A (eds) *Mensheviki v 1917 godu: tom 3. Ot kornilovskogo miatezha do kontsa dekabria*. Moscow: Rospen, 1997, pp. 370–525.



never given up hope of reuniting the RSDRP, was the issue which caused the SRs and Mensheviks, who had been drifting together and finding common ground for years, to begin to drift apart again. Although they formed electoral blocs together in the spring of 1918, the vast majority of leading Mensheviks (the behaviour of local Mensheviks was a different matter) did not become involved in the SR-led struggle with Soviet power that began in late spring 1918. The Kadets and Popular Socialists were far more interested in armed struggle, as shown by their involvement with the Committee to Save the Fatherland and the Revolution. By the end of 1917, then, the ground had been laid for the possibility of organisational unity between SRs (particularly right-SRs), Kadets (particularly left-Kadets) and Popular Socialists. The dispersal by the Bolsheviks (supported by the Left-SRs) of the Constituent Assembly, with its overwhelming SR majority, on its first day of meeting on 5 January 1918, was perhaps the final straw for those who had begun to consider the possibility of further, long-term, armed struggle against Sovnarkom. Soon the anti-Bolshevik underground began to form.

### *The Historiography of the Anti-Bolshevik Underground*

The previous section examined the origins of the anti-Bolshevik underground in the politics of 1917. There follows a review of its historiography to date. Few western histories touch upon the UR and the anti-Bolshevik underground.<sup>77</sup> Invariably, accounts of the Russian Civil War have focused upon the military campaigns of the so-called 'White' generals Denikin, Iudenich and Wrangel and Admiral Kolchak. The likes of the UR and the National Centre have only tended to be mentioned in connection with those White leaders and their regimes.<sup>78</sup> The work of William Rosenberg, on the Kadet Party in the years 1917 to 1921, contains some detailed

<sup>77</sup> It is telling that a web search for the phrase 'Union of Regeneration' or 'Union for the Regeneration of Russia' does not find a single direct hit, although it does lead to a short piece by John Long (see p. 22, n. 80).

<sup>78</sup> The single most comprehensive study of the UR currently available in the west appears in the first chapter of Smele, J. D. *Civil War in Siberia: The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918–1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 (hereafter *Civil War in Siberia*), pp. 33–107. As the title suggests, however, this study is limited to the work of the UR in the setting up of the Directory which was overthrown by Admiral Kolchak in the Omsk coup of 18 November 1918. The UR also features quite prominently, again only in the chronological and geographical limits of the period of the Directory, in Swain, G. *The Origins of the Russian Civil War*. London: Longman, 1995 (hereafter *Origins of the Russian Civil War*).



information on the National Centre (which was essentially a Kadet organisation). However, this again focuses in particular on its work within General Denikin's regime in South Russia.<sup>79</sup> The sole example of a dedicated English language piece on the UR is a brief but thorough introductory article by John Long.<sup>80</sup>

However, a number of Russian language studies are available which, whilst not focusing on the underground in particular, give a more detailed picture of the UR and other such organisations. These studies include a few works by Russian émigrés, but in the main are products of Soviet historiography. Consequently the vast majority of published Russian language material is skewed towards one point of view or another. Generally, émigré works tend to attempt to displace the blame not only for the failures of 1917 but also of 1918, towards those with whom the author was not associated. There is little objective analysis and criticism of the behaviour of the figures involved. In Soviet historiography, the failure of the 'democratic' phase of the revolution and the transition to the Red-White struggle is viewed as inevitable. The theoretical basis for such a position is usually set out in the introductory pages, often utilising quotations from Lenin's collected works. Having stated at the beginning that there could be no 'third way', that petit-bourgeois (as both Kadets and SRs were uniformly viewed in the Soviet era) counter-revolution was bound to lead to anti-democratic reaction, Soviet works generally continue by showing the events in such a manner as to prove this point. This is not to denigrate the value of either to the western historian. The detail involved in such works is far greater than anything available in western languages, and for the purposes of this study, the nature of the relationships between underground groups is explored in a way that has not yet been achieved in the West. However, anything approaching a definitive study of the anti-Bolshevik underground and its role in the civil war has until now remained unwritten.

In the West, as stated above, the best study of the liberal side of the equation has been provided by William Rosenberg. In his study of the Kadet Party in the revolution and civil war period, Rosenberg traced the divisions within the party through 1917 into the post-October scene and then into the aftermath of the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly (coinciding, as that did, broadly with the shocking murders in prison of the leading liberals Kokoshkin and Fedorov). This led to

<sup>79</sup> Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, pp. 286–356.

<sup>80</sup> Long, J. W. 'Union for the Regeneration of Russia', in *Modern Encyclopaedia of Russian and Soviet History*, Vol. 40 (1985), pp. 221–225.

emergency Kadet meetings over tactics, during which the basic alternatives discussed were an alliance with Generals Alekseev and Kornilov (that is, with the right) or with the moderate left. This led to a serious split in the party between those (like Novgorodtsev) who blamed the moderate left for the failures of 1917, and those (including Astrova, Vinaver and Lev Krol) who were more concerned with regaining the support of the masses than with acrimony. It was Novgorodtsev whose proposals became the 'official' party line, the old 'conciliationists' being pushed to the sidelines of the party.<sup>81</sup> Thereafter Rosenberg outlines the growing closeness between Astrova's wing and the Popular Socialists and SRs who formed the UR and examines the agreement between the National Centre and the UR made in May 1918 on the rejection of the Constitutional Assembly and the possibility of a government by a Directory.<sup>82</sup> This is all, of course, presented within the context of liberal politics – clearly a major problem for the Kadets, who had fared badly in the recent elections to the Constituent Assembly. For the party to have supported the Assembly would thus have rendered it without any say in the anti-Bolshevik struggle.

It is clear from Rosenberg's study that the left of the party, which is almost universally identified with Astrova, wished to remain within the frame of mainstream liberal politics. Not for Astrova the factionalism of the SRs. This was a tactic that was largely unsuccessful, as at the same time as the left liberals were rallying around opposition to the Brest-Litovsk treaty with rightist pro-Allied socialists, Miliukov was taking his own wing of the party in an entirely different direction – that of working with Germany for the possible overthrow of the Bolsheviks. Miliukov's group, the 'Right Centre' was thus involved in work with the German-installed puppet regime of Hetman Skoropadskii in Kiev. Clearly divisions within the party were at a higher level than ever before.

As regards the work of the left liberals, Rosenberg outlines the stance of the National Centre in South Russia, as it gradually shifted to the right, from 1918 to 1919. The initial phase is one in which the Moscow agreement with the UR was honoured, with Astrova hoping that Denikin would unify with the Ufa Directory. However, this failed, possibly due to the perceived breaking of the agreement by the UR at Ufa. This meant that Astrova refused his post and ended UR–National Centre

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 282–87.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 291–99.



collaboration, at least as far as those in South Russia were concerned, although both groups represented Russia at the Jassy Conference of November 1918.<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, Rosenberg is clear that, from a Kadet perspective, the Directory was doomed to failure and thus the Ufa State Conference was a dismal failure.<sup>84</sup> Rosenberg also outlines the work of the two prominent Kadets sent to the Urals and western Siberia to link with the UR and the Siberian Kadets. One, Lev Krol, was a UR member and worked for compromise, the other, Viktor Pepeliaev, was a National Centre affiliate who worked against this and is implicated in the Omsk coup.<sup>85</sup> Subsequent parts of the book outline later UR work in South Russia as a part of a new collaborative effort with the National Centre to persuade Denikin to enact popular legislation and involve local government to maintain control over White held territories.<sup>86</sup> However, this is again a rather brief treatment, more concerned with the attitude of the Kadet Party as a whole and their influence on Denikin than with the efforts of inter-party organisations which is the focus of the present thesis.

The Soviet counterpart to Rosenberg's work is that of Natalia Dumova.<sup>87</sup> Rather than a study of the party in the years of the revolution and civil war, though, her work focuses on the part played by Kadets in the civil war itself, including the military plans of 1918. Therefore, it is natural that her book contains more information than Rosenberg on the National Centre and its links with both the UR and Boris Savinkov's group, the Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom. The negotiations with the UR are examined in detail, with the reasons for the later disagreement being hinted at. Dumova says that the agreement made between the two sides was only made 'for the sake of achieving an agreement', with much emphasis placed on the links between all underground groups in Moscow and Allied agents who were, it is alleged, their paymasters.<sup>88</sup> Dumova's view is, unsurprisingly, less sympathetic towards the Kadets than that of Rosenberg, although the latter is far from uncritical. From Dumova's perspective, the breakdown in relations between the

<sup>83</sup> The Conference at Jassy in Romania was called by the Allies to discuss possible Allied aid for the White movement. The three groups that represented the Conference, the UR, the National Centre and the Council for the National Unification of Russia failed to put forward any kind of united appearance and the conference was thus a fiasco. See below, pp. 200–217.

<sup>84</sup> Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, pp. 392–393.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 389–396.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 422–423.

<sup>87</sup> Dumova, N. G. *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia i ee razgrom (Oktiabr' 1917–1920gg.)*. Moscow: Nauka, 1982. (Hereafter *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*).

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 125–129.



Kadets and the left was due to the fact that any unity in the spring was largely illusory, and thus the failure of the Ufa State Conference to create a genuine all-Russian government was entirely due to the attitude of the Kadets. Dumova looks at the Kadet-dominated Provisional Regional Government of the Urals (one of the regional governments represented at the Ufa State Conference), in which Krol was the 'main actor', and which allegedly brought terror and chaos to the region. She also examines Kadet representation in the North Russian government, led by the UR's Chaikovskii, and at Pepaliaev's actions in Siberia, all of which are used to show the 'strict course of the Kadets towards a military-terrorist military dictator'.<sup>89</sup>

The second half of Dumova's study concentrates on the work of the Kadets with each of the White leaders. The importance of the National Centre in Petrograd is highlighted, with the National Centre and the UR working to prepare the ground for General Iudenich's attack on the city. In addition, the situation in Moscow in 1919 is detailed, with underground members sending reports on the Red Army to Denikin, and with the formation of a 'Tactical Centre' out of Moscow UR and National Centre members and the 'Council of Public Figures,' which supported a temporary dictatorship to restore order to Russia.<sup>90</sup> In her section on South Russia, there is some detail on the attempts at unity between the National Centre, the UR and the Council for the State Unity of Russia, a right-wing group. On the whole, Dumova views the actions of the left-Kadets and the UR in South Russia to have been an 'unnecessary ballast' of support for the Volunteer Army (and later in its new guise of the Armed Forces of South Russia) and as a 'false cloak' which attempted to conceal from the masses the reactionary nature of Denikin. On the whole, Dumova's work is a mine of information, a superbly detailed study which is less didactic than many Soviet works. However, it is too hostile to the Kadets to treat the anti-Bolshevik underground in a balanced way. The attempt to bring a more political dimension to the civil war is derided as a shameless bourgeois capitulation to military reaction.

As Kadet-based studies focus on the National Centre with occasional reference to the UR, precisely the opposite is true of studies which look at the work of the SRs and the early stages of the civil war as it began on the Upper Volga, in the Urals region and in Siberia. A recent study by N. G. O. Pereira traces the long-term

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p. 265.



development of Siberia and the reasons for it having more bourgeois sensibilities than European Russia, before outlining the various anti-Bolshevik governments which appeared in Siberia in 1918, leading up to the events in Omsk in November which made Admiral Kolchak 'Supreme Ruler.'<sup>91</sup> Pereira then moves on to the Kolchak regime itself. Much the same ground has been covered by Jonathan Smele, although in considerably more detail.<sup>92</sup> In the latter's work, though, proportionally less space is given to the origins of the *oblastnik* (regionalist) movement and the various regionalist governments (such as the Provisional Siberian Government or PSG, the Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia or PGAS and the Western Siberian Commissariat.) More important to this study, which focuses on Kolchak's rule, is the origins of the Ufa Directory, and it is for this reason that Smele's work contains much more on the UR. Smele examines the role of the UR in mediating between the rival anti-Bolshevik Governments of the area from the Upper Volga towns to Vladovostok, in particular the SR-dominated Komuch (an abbreviation of the Committee of the Constituent Assembly) and the Omsk-based (and more bourgeois in nature) PSG. Identifying the UR as a 'fragile partnership', Smele sees their success in organising and dominating the conferences at Cheliabinsk and then finally the major conference in Ufa as being due to pressure of the influential Czechoslovak Legion and to the respect the UR gained by its 'principled stand'.<sup>93</sup> However, Smele portrays the all-important Ufa State Conference as a fudge which resulted in the left and right both deserting the UR's cause.<sup>94</sup> This is an interesting version of events, as others, including Geoffrey Swain, have concluded that the conference was a UR triumph, largely due to the fact that the five-man Directory contained three leading UR members: Nikolai Avksent'ev, Vladimir Zenzinov and General Boldyrev.<sup>95</sup> However, the course of events between the Ufa Conference and the Omsk coup, a period which was characterised by the inaction and failure on behalf of the new government to protect itself from the machinations of bourgeois and Kadet circles in Siberia, indicates that the conference was not a success. As much as exterior factors were important, including the actions of individuals such as Pepeliaev and PSG Minister of

<sup>91</sup> Pereira, N. G. O. *White Siberia*. Dalhousie: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996 (hereafter *White Siberia*.)

<sup>92</sup> Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 10-677.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 45-48.

<sup>95</sup> Swain, *Origins of the Russian Civil War*, p. 220.



Finance Ivan Mikhailov, the failure of the Directory must be seen in part as the failure of the Ufa Conference and, by implication, of the UR, to create a progressive government acceptable to bourgeois society. Of course, as civil war historians concerned with a larger picture, neither Smele, nor Swain nor Pereira examine the reasons for the failure of the Directory in these terms. However, the question must be posed: why did the Ufa Conference create the Directory in a form which ensured that Kadets both in Russia and Siberia would spurn it, and that the centre ground of the PSR led by Chernov would not support it?

This question has been addressed somewhat more satisfactorily by Russian historians. In particular, the work of S. P. Mel'gunov on Kolchak provides some indications as to where problems were encountered at Ufa.<sup>96</sup> As well as briefly tracing the development of plans for an anti-German and anti-Bolshevik front, Mel'gunov examines the rivalry between Komuch and the PSG and the role of the National Centre and particularly the UR. Mel'gunov's overall assessment of the Ufa State Conference is that it was something of a *débâcle*. Not only was Ufa a poorly chosen location, which meant that virtually no National Centre members could attend, but once there delegates from the opposite ends of the political spectrum of the conference held intractable positions. There were two major sticking points as represented by Mel'gunov: the issue of the authority of the Constituent Assembly dispersed by the Bolsheviks on 5 January, and the issue of the Directory's membership. Mel'gunov believes that Komuch were too inflexible over the power of the Assembly, as the responsible body to which the new government must be drawn. Likewise, it would seem that the small PSG delegation had been instructed by its leader, Vologodskii, not to enter into any compromise, especially considering the weak position of Komuch (with the towns of Kazan and Simbirsk falling to the Red Army in mid-September) and the fact that he was holding talks with Allied representatives in the Far East in the hope of receiving official recognition for the PSG.<sup>97</sup> The compromise agreement, that the Directory was to be responsible to no body until either 1 January 1919 (if a quorum of 250 Constituent Assembly members could be gathered) or 1 February (if 170 members could meet and form such a body) is judged to have been due to exterior circumstances which pressurised the Komuch

<sup>96</sup> Mel'gunov, S. P. *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka: Iz istorii grazhdanskoi voini na Volge, Urale i v Sibiri*. 3 Vols., Belgrade: Russkaia tipografiia, 1929 (hereafter *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*).

<sup>97</sup> Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 37–38, 78.



and PSG delegates. For Komuch, of course, the deteriorating military situation was key, and for the PSG the murder of PGAS member Novoselov (in which PSG members were implicated) damaged its authority.<sup>98</sup> However, Mel'gunov also blames the UR for what he considers to have been their giving in too much to the demands of Komuch, not only with regard to the theoretical approval of the Constituent Assembly of 1917 and the possibility of its utility as a responsible body in the future, but also over the membership of the Directory, which included two SRs and one SR sympathiser.<sup>99</sup> This was clearly not acceptable to bourgeois circles in either Siberia or in South Russia, and moreover contravened an agreement with the National Centre made in Moscow in the spring over the composition of the Directory and its authority.<sup>100</sup> However, the arrangements over the Constituent Assembly still meant that the new government had license to act without responsibility, and no Komuch members were chosen to serve on it. Thus, the Directory was unsatisfactory to both sides, who left the Conference feeling that they had given too much away. All concessions to the left are considered by Mel'gunov to have been mistakes.

This portrayal of events appears to be a little one-sided, as though the left was merely required to give concessions to the right over the Constituent Assembly to ensure the success of the Directory. Mel'gunov later shows how vulnerable the Directory was to attack, with Avksent'ev unwilling to use the Czechoslovak Legion against Mikhailov for his apparent complicity in the Novoselov murder.<sup>101</sup> Concern for legality and moderation restricted the Directory's course of action. In fact, Mel'gunov's account of events leading up to the Omsk coup is, like that of Smele, rightly or wrongly rather pessimistic in tone, portraying the Directory as being incapable of action and essentially doomed, especially after the decision, made in retreat from the advancing Red Army, to move the seat of government to Omsk.

A number of Soviet works have looked at the SRs and the civil war in the eastern and northern parts of the Russian Empire. The closest examination of the anti-Bolshevik underground has been undertaken by Grigorii Ioffe in a number of articles and a monograph on Kolchak. In an article on the 'Council for the National

<sup>98</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. 1, pp. 214–222.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 226–228.

<sup>100</sup> The agreement was that the government would be in the form of a three-man directory, consisting of one socialist, one non-socialist and one military general. This directory would act as a collegiate dictatorship. See below, pp. 66–68.

<sup>101</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. 2, p. 6.



Unification of Russia', Ioffe briefly outlined that organisation's formation, and links with the National Centre and the UR in South Russia in the spring of 1919, explaining that its main aim was to create a united political front which was more right-wing than the UR and National Centre alone, and that its aim was the restoration of a Constitutional Monarchy.<sup>102</sup> A later article on the Omsk coup details the rising tide of reactionary feeling in Omsk in October and November 1918 and identifies many of the key participants.<sup>103</sup> Ioffe gives some detail on the connections between Kadets, Popular Socialists and Right SRs in 1917 in the 'Republican Centre', which shows that such organisations existed before the October Revolution, in a collection edited by Korablev and Shishkin which contains a number of useful articles on Siberia and the nature of the oblastniks, their work with SRs and Kadets throughout 1918 and the nature of the PSG.<sup>104</sup> However, Ioffe's most important work is a book on Kolchak which, like Dumova, gives space to the formation of the UR, the Right Centre and later the National Centre in Moscow in spring–summer 1918.<sup>105</sup> Ioffe also gives information about the connections between the UR and the National Centre with Savinkov's Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom, and their common usage of money obtained from Allied sources, together with their work, which Ioffe suggests was close, on plans for armed uprising on the Volga.<sup>106</sup> Ioffe goes on to supply another narrative of events surrounding the Ufa State Conference, which, although by no means as detailed or revealing as Mel'gunov's work, contains some original material. For the purposes of this study, though, it is the section on the Moscow underground that is significant. If Ioffe is correct, and he unfortunately presents little supportive evidence, then the uprisings on the Volga in the summer of 1918 were co-ordinated between the UR and Savinkov. The recreation of an Eastern Front southwards from Arkhangel'sk, where Chaikovskii led a successful overthrow of Soviet power with Allied help on 1 to 2 August, could lead through Iaroslavl,

<sup>102</sup> Ioffe, G. Z. 'Pomeshchich'e-burzhuaznaia organizatsiia "Sovet gosudarstvennogo ob"edineneniia Rossii" (1918–1919gg.)', in Mints, I. I. (ed.) *Neproletarskie partii Rossii v 1917g. i v grazhdanskoi voiny*. Moscow, Kalinin: Kalininskii Gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1980 (hereafter 'Sovet gosudarstvennogo ob"edineneniia'), pp. 223–233.

<sup>103</sup> Ioffe, G. Z. 'Ot kontrrevoliutsii "demokraticeskoi" k burzhuaznei-pomeshch'ichei diktature (Omskii perevorot)', *Istoriia SSSR* (Moscow), No.1 (1982), pp. 108–119.

<sup>104</sup> Ioffe, G. Z. 'Iz istorii kadetsko-monarkhisticheskoi kontrrevoliutsiia v Rossii', in Korablev, Iu. V. and Shishkin V. I. (eds.) *Iz istorii interventsii i grazhdanskoi voini v sibir i na Dal'nem vostoke 1917–1922gg.* Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1985, pp. 161–169.

<sup>105</sup> Ioffe, G. Z. *Kolchakovskaia aventiura i ee krakh*. Moscow: Mysl, 1983 (hereafter *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*).



which Savinkov held for sixteen days from 6 to 22 July, and other towns which Savinkov's Union also attempted to seize in early July.

Another important Brezhnev-era source is a monograph on the PSR by K. V. Gusev.<sup>107</sup> This study, which follows the various strands on the party in much the same way as Dumova does the Kadets, details Central Committee meetings of 1918 and the way in which the exodus of SRs to various parts of the empire was sanctioned. The coverage is, however, very brief and is not particularly revealing. Gusev predictably contradicts Mel'gunov over the Ufa State Conference, stating that Avksent'ev, Zenzinov and the others bowed to pressure from bourgeois reaction in the creation of the Directory. Later sections of the study, however, are useful on UR/SR activities in emigration in France.

The work of both Ioffe and Gusev expanded on that of earlier Soviet historians, such as Vera Vladimirova. Vladimirova's work, which dates from the late 1920s is largely based on anecdotal evidence, such as personal memoirs, as well as trial testimonies.<sup>108</sup> However rather than an interpretive study, such as that of Ioffe, this is more akin to a highly valuable collection of first-hand accounts and contains a wealth of minute detail on the UR's formation in Moscow in April 1918, its membership and its contacts with other groups (including officer groups) as well as Allied representatives. Vladimirova claims (again, citing no evidence) that UR representatives provided Allied representatives with a detailed military plan.<sup>109</sup> This claim is, of course, highly dubious: the purpose of this claim being to associate the Allies as much as possible with the beginning of the civil war. However, in later sections on the Volga uprisings Vladimirova uses Savinkov's trial testimony to demonstrate that the aim was to link up with Chaikovskii's overthrow of the Bolsheviks in the northern region.<sup>110</sup> Vladimirova also provides more information, albeit again often anecdotal in nature, on the Ufa State Conference and events in Siberia, and on Chaikovskii's government in Arkhangel'sk and its subsequent overthrow by Chaplin. Throughout her book, Vladimirova is at pains to point out any facts which show a general lack of popular support for the anti-Bolsheviks, whether in

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>107</sup> Gusev, K. V. *Partiia Eserov: Ot melko-burzhuaiznaia revoliutsiia do kontrrevoliutsiia*. Moscow: Mysl', 1975 (hereafter *Partiia Eserov*).

<sup>108</sup> Vladimirova, V. *God sluzhby "sotsialistov" kapitalistami: Ocherki po istorii kontr-revoliutsii*. Moscow: Gosizdat, 1927 (hereafter *God sluzhby "sotsialistov"*).

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, p. 214.



Arkhangel'sk, Iaroslavl or anywhere in the Volga-Urals region. Indeed, the tone of the study somewhat unfairly portrays the moderate socialists who fought the Bolsheviks as rather pathetic figures, isolated between extremes on both the left and the right and who were bound to serve as agents of reaction.

Apart from the relevant sections in Vladimirova's work, the Popular Socialist's part in the UR and the civil war are best covered by émigré writings relating to the revolutionary life of Chaikovskii. An exhaustive political biography of Chaikovskii in the revolution and civil war period by Mel'gunov is of great utility to the student of the anti-Bolshevik underground and its work in the struggle against Soviet power.<sup>111</sup> The book covers Chaikovskii's vital role in the creation of the UR and its negotiations with the National Centre, the preparation for the overthrow of the Bolsheviks in Arkhangel'sk and his actions as Chairman of the subsequent regional government, before moving on to his deposition and emigration to France, where he worked to gain Allied support for the Kolchak regime (which he now supported) and his return to Russia to link with General Denikin's regime. Mel'gunov is utterly sympathetic towards his old party leader in his gradual but unending shift to the right, which he justifies as the only way to fight the Bolsheviks. Therefore, once again, Mel'gunov is highly critical of the SR members of the UR who made concessions to Komuch at the Ufa State Conference. Unfortunately, while being a source of immense value, the study is so uncritical that certain questions are never addressed, such as why Chaikovskii went North instead of continuing to the Urals where he could have attended the Ufa State Conference. In short, Chaikovskii's actions are apologised for and justified without reference to his motives, other than the obvious wish to create a broad based anti-Bolshevik movement. A complementary volume, a collection of articles written by those who knew and worked with Chaikovskii, is similarly sympathetic.<sup>112</sup> Largely a collection of personal recollections, of most use is an article by fellow Popular Socialist and UR member V. A. Miakotin, who gives some information on the creation of the UR.<sup>113</sup> This is in fact a truncated version of a lengthy memoir article by Miakotin, a journalist and historian by profession, from the

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>111</sup> Mel'gunov, S. P. *N. V. Chaikovskii v gody grazhdanskoi voiny (Materialy dlia istorii russkoi obshchestvennosti, 1917–1925gg.)* Paris: Rodnik, 1929 (hereafter *N. V. Chaikovskii*).

<sup>112</sup> Titov, A. A. (ed.) *Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii: religioznii i obshchestvennye poiski*. Paris: Rodnik, 1929 (hereafter *Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii*).

<sup>113</sup> Miakotin, V. A, 'Iz vospominanii', in *ibid.*, pp. 257–258.



émigré journal *Na chuzhoi storone* which is perhaps the most detailed account of the formation of the UR and its negotiations with the National Centre.<sup>114</sup>

Unfortunately, in-depth study of the revolution and civil war has not been in vogue in Russia in the post-Soviet era. A small number of studies on the period refer to the UR or other organisations, but usually either in passing or in a very general manner.<sup>115</sup> It can therefore be seen that the existing published accounts of the work of the anti-Bolshevik underground are highly fragmentary and/or partial in nature. There has thus far been no attempt to gather the various strands of UR-led activity in the political underground and in the non-Red zone of Russia in the revolution and civil war. While some historians, both in the west and in Russia, have made reference to these organisations, none examine them as a whole, to show when they existed, what their aims were and what part they played in the struggle with the Bolsheviks. Generally, the works referred to above only contain information about the UR, the National Centre and the other organisations where directly relevant to the focal point of the study in question. It is hoped that by investigating the UR and the work of it and other political groups as a whole, a different part of history of the civil war can emerge – one that does not focus on the White generals but is also neither a social or regional study. The characters that remained in Russia during 1917–1919 and joined the organisations that are the focus of this study did so in the hope of preserving a political element to the anti-Bolshevik movement, and of preventing a wholesale return to the pre-February situation, while recognising that strong military authority was also necessary if the Red Army was to be defeated. They conducted their struggle in several of the major theatres of the civil war.

It is the aim of this thesis, then, to fill in one of the gaps in the historiography of the civil war. Whilst the organisations to be examined are mentioned in several important studies, there has been no comprehensive study of them in any language. Were the studies by Mel'gunov more objective, there would have been no need for

<sup>114</sup> Miakotin, V. A. 'Iz nedalekago proshlago', *Na chuzhoi storone* (Berlin), No. 2 (1923), pp. 178–199. Hereafter 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I'.

<sup>115</sup> Trukan, G. A. *Antibol'shevistskie pravitel'stva Rossii*. Moscow: IRI RAN, 2000, pp. 50–63 contains a small general chapter on the Ufa State Conference and the life of the Directory; Fediuk, V. P. *Belye: antibol'shevistskoe dvizhenie na iuge Rossii, 1917–1918gg*. Moscow: Airo-XX, 1996 (hereafter *Belye*) makes some references to political organisations in South Russia in 1918; Pleshkevich, E. A. 'Vremennoe oblastnoe pravitel'stvo urala: diskussii o prichinakh obrazovaniia', *Otechesvennaia istoriia* (2003), No.5, pp. 30–34 is a rare, if short, dedicated study of the Urals Government formed in August 1918.

this. However, the activities of the anti-Bolshevik underground, which was so crucial in determining the course of events of the first year of the Russian Civil War, is yet to receive a balanced treatment. It is not difficult to justify providing that treatment. The UR may have been a failure, but the study of the anti-Bolshevik camp in general is the study of colossal failures. Equally, the crucial year of the civil war in military terms may well have been 1919. However, the crucial year in political terms was undoubtedly 1918, and the present study will show why, in 1918, moderate political opposition to Bolshevism failed.



## Chapter 2

### **The Anti-Bolshevik Underground Coalesces**

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the formation of the Union of Regeneration and the underground groups that were connected with it (the National Centre and the Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom) and to examine the work of these groups from March to August 1918. Included in that work was the attempt to encourage Allied intervention and gain financial and military assistance for anti-Bolshevik uprisings to be conducted that summer, and the agreement on the future structure of an all-Russian anti-Bolshevik government which, it was hoped, would receive Allied recognition and help. The initial uprisings, and attempted uprisings, conducted mainly by representatives of the UR and the Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom, failed to achieve the goal of re-establishing the Eastern Front. The work of the anti-Bolshevik underground might have ended with this failure, were it not for the liberation of Siberia from Soviet rule by the revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion. The examination of this period will focus on the work of the underground groups and will attempt to avoid retelling the story of Allied intervention, which has already holds a disproportionately high share of the historiography of the Russian Civil War. Likewise, a comprehensive history of the Northern Oblast Government will not be attempted here, as it was only tangentially related to the activities of the underground in central Russia but was of sufficient substance to merit a specialised study of its own. For the purposes of this study, only the month of August is important, as the Chaplin coup of 6 September effectively ended the democratic counter-revolution in North Russia and it will suffice to examine the role of Chaikovskii, the leading UR member and Chairman of the Northern Oblast Government, with regard to the Chaplin coup and his election as a member of the Provisional all-Russian Government, the Directory, at the end of September.

The formation of the anti-Bolshevik underground had its roots in 1917 in more ways than one. In addition to the fragmentation of moderate political parties as

detailed in the previous chapter, the emergence of political groups of a less tightly defined and disciplined type began during the summer. Two of these groups were to be precursors of the Right Centre, the first conspiratorial organisation to form in 1918 and precursor to the National Centre. These were the Union of Public Figures and the Union of Landowners, two right-of-centre pressure groups which both began their activity around the time of the Moscow State Conference. The Union of Public Figures originated at the end of July, its first conference being held on 8 August.<sup>1</sup> At this meeting a number of groups (including representatives of the co-operative movement) were present, but the conference largely consisted of members of the intelligentsia and the Kadet Party.<sup>2</sup> Generally speaking, the Kadets who were involved were conservative in hue, and a major role was played by Miliukov, who was elected (along with General Alekseev and S. N. Tret'iakov) to a committee intended to establish links with right-wing delegates to the Moscow State Conference.<sup>3</sup> The two groups talked openly of the abstract conservative Russian ideal that would permeate the language of the anti-Bolshevik underground throughout the civil war: *gosudarstvennost*, or 'state-mindedness'. This term was open to broad interpretation and was generally used as a tool to attack socialism and excuse conservative and even reactionary politics. In 1917 the Union of Landowners and the Union of Public Figures used such terminology to attack one man above all others: Viktor Chernov. As S. A. Kotliarevskii, member of the Union of Public figures and future National Centre affiliate put it, 'He [Chernov] was a kind of symbol of the destruction of state-mindedness in Russia.'<sup>4</sup> Of course, the formation of these groups can be seen as part of the rising tide of patriotic fervour that preceded the Kornilov Affair. The Union of Public Figures met only once more prior to the Bolshevik takeover, in September, in far more gloomy circumstances and with far fewer attendees. The dominating theme of this meeting was the destruction of the army and the gathering was addressed by Generals Brusilov and Ruzskii on the subject.<sup>5</sup> After the October Revolution these

<sup>1</sup> Mel'gunov, S. P. (ed.), 'Sovet obshchestvennykh deiatelei v Moskve 1917–1919gg. (Pokazaniia N. N. Vinogradskago v dele "Takticheskoe tsentra")', *Na Chuzhoi Storone* No. 9 (1925) (hereafter 'Pokazaniia N. N. Vinogradskago'), p. 92; Mel'gunov, S. P. ' "Natsional'nye tsentra" v Moskve v 1918g. (Iz pokazanii S. A. Kotliarevskago po delu "Takticheskago Tsentra")', *Na Chuzhoi Storone* No. 8 (1924) (hereafter 'Iz Pokazanii S. A. Kotliarevskago'), p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Pokazaniia N. N. Vinogradskago', p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Iz Pokazanii S. A. Kotliarevskago', p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 127. See Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, p. 210 for the Union of Landowners and the attacks on Chernov.

<sup>5</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Pokazaniia N. N. Vinogradskago', p. 93.



organisations halted any kind of activity and lost a number of influential members. However, it was the rekindling of the Union Of Public Figures in particular that influenced to the formation of the Right Centre.

The Union of Regeneration, of course, had no roots in the conservative forces uniting around General Kornilov and the kind of 'state-mindedness' that would lead Russia to a one-man dictatorship. The groups described above had no common cause with the future members of the UR. Prior to October, moderate socialists supported and participated in the existing state order and had no need for any inter-party combinations, save for the one headed by Kerensky. After the October Revolution they were, however, involved in the Committee to Save the Fatherland and the Revolution, which named Avksent'ev as chairman of the republic. The Committee itself was chaired by Gots and it contained representatives from the *Edinstvo* group of Mensheviks and the Petrograd City Duma, as well as SRs and Popular Socialists.<sup>6</sup> After the demise of this group and the other attempts in November to oppose the Bolshevik take-over, the PSR was to change tack and redefine its attitude to the mistakes of 1917 at its Fourth Party Congress, held from 9 to 18 December. The participation in coalition with the bourgeoisie and in inter-party groups was banned and the party now rested its hopes on the forthcoming convocation of the Constituent Assembly, in which the party would have a majority, and could therefore perhaps hope to fight the Bolsheviks from a legal and public platform. At the same time, however, the military tradition of the PSR was not forgotten and a military organisation was elected, led by G. Semenov. This organisation prepared forces in the capital for the defence of the Constituent Assembly, and Semenov intended to go as far as a military rising against the Bolsheviks if necessary. This option was, however, considered to be somewhat premature and over-zealous by the Central Committee and only a directive against an uprising prevented Semenov, who was something of a loose cannon, from taking radical action in January.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Golinkov, D. L. *Krushenie antisovetskogo podpol'ia v SSSR*. Moscow: Izd. Pol. Lit, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1977, Vol. I (Hereafter *Krushenie antisovetskoe podpol'ia*), p. 15. Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 21. Vladimirova incorrectly names Avksent'ev as chairman of the Committee.

<sup>7</sup> Semenov (Vasil'ev), G. *Voenniaia i boevaia Rabota Partii Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionnerov za 1917–1918gg.* Moscow: Gosizdat, 1922 (hereafter *Voenniaia i boevaia Rabota*), pp. 10–13. It should be noted that Semenov was a very shady figure and possibly an *agent provocateur* working for the Bolsheviks, as he gave what was almost certainly a false testimony linking the PSR with Fania Kaplan and the attempt on Lenin's life in 1918, and his actions during the summer of 1918 point to a



The activity of the Kadets in the aftermath of the revolution was hampered by their traditional concern for legality.<sup>8</sup> It was naturally far easier for the members of the PSR, with its heritage as a radical anti-authority group with terrorist connections, to contemplate armed struggle, at least in the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik assumption of power and before the new tactics agreed at the Fourth Party Congress. The Kadet Party was, in fact, rather inactive as a whole after October, being locked as it was in debates over whether a 'conciliationist' shift to accommodate the left or an alliance with the reactionary right was the best course of action. Already in November representatives of the Kadet Party were attempting to establish contact with moderate socialists, such as the Menshevik A. N. Potresov, although at this time these attempts were fruitless.<sup>9</sup> However, the relative passivity of right-wing socialists and liberals of all persuasion was to change with the coming of the new year.

Two events at the beginning of January shocked the anti-Bolshevik camp into action and precipitated the formation of underground organisations: the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly and the murder of Kadets F. Kokoshkin and A. Shingarev. These events affected left- and right-wing circles in different ways, but with similar results. The Kadet Party was shown emphatically that the concern for legality that had often paralysed it was no longer applicable and that a change in tactics was required. SRs and Popular Socialists, meanwhile, now became convinced that open legal opposition was impossible and that the kind of anarchy that resulted in the murders could easily threaten them. Chaikovskii wrote at the time of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly that it was time for parties of the left to form a centre to oppose the Bolsheviks.<sup>10</sup> Avksent'ev and future UR member P. Sorokin were fellow prisoners of the two Kadets in the Peter and Paul Fortress and it is clear that the murders had an effect on Sorokin's attitude to the Bolshevik regime, as they probably had also on Avksent'ev.<sup>11</sup> The left and the right had few options before them. It seemed that an appeal to the masses was pointless – after all, as Zenzinov put it, the streets had

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duplicitous nature. See Lyandres, S. 'The 1918 Attempt on the Life of Lenin: A New Look at the Evidence.', *Slavic Review* Vol. 48 (1989), pp. 432–448.

<sup>8</sup> On Kadet concern for 'legitimacy' and the difficulty in reconciling this with working with the Committee to Save the Fatherland and the Revolution, see Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, pp. 268–270.

<sup>9</sup> Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> Mel'gunov, N.V. *Chaikovskii*, p. 47.

<sup>11</sup> Sorokin, P. *Leaves from a Russian Diary*. London: Hurst and Blackett, 1924 (hereafter *Russian Diary*), pp. 121–126.



hardly teemed with crowds (as SRs had clearly expected) supporting the Constituent Assembly.<sup>12</sup> It was as a consequence of this lack of options and a fear for safety that the underground formed.

### *The Right Centre*

The twin shocks of January further divided the Kadet Party. P. Novgorodtsev, acting as chairman of the Central Committee, began to argue for strengthening the party's ties with the right and for supporting General Kornilov (who, together with General Alekseev, had formed the right-wing anti-Bolshevik Volunteer Army on the Don). This inevitably drew him into conflict with the 'conciliationists' such as Astrov, Vinaver and Lev Krol, who favoured accommodation with the left.<sup>13</sup> Through Novgorodtsev, the Central Committee established ties with the Union of Public Figures, which itself had links with Trade and Industry circles through S. N. Tret'iakov and A. A. Cherven-Vodali and with the Union of Landowners via V. I. Gurko.<sup>14</sup> Other members of the Union of Public Figures gathering in late January and early February were Baron V. V. Meller-Zakomel'skii, I. I. Shidlovskii, V. M. Ustinov, N. A. Berdiaev and V. N. Chelishchev. Sources on the origins of the Right Centre are sketchy and the most detailed accounts of them in Soviet historiography make heavy use of Cheka files published in 1920 and recently reprinted.<sup>15</sup> However, the testimony of members of the anti-Bolshevik underground must be treated with care; many are tainted by the wish not to implicate others, and clearly individuals go to great lengths to minimise their own contributions. Nevertheless such first-hand accounts provide an excellent source on the subject. In general, the Union of Public Figures was composed of Kadets, academics and the occasional representative from the co-operatives, seen by the core of the union as representatives of the 'left'. Astrov

<sup>12</sup> Zenzinov, V. 'Bor'ba rossiskoi demokratii s bol'shevikami v 1918 goda. Moskva-Samara-Ufa-Omsk. Vospominanii', in Trukan, G. A. *Rossiiia Antibol'shevistskaia: iz belogvardeiskikh i emigrantskikh arkhivov*. Moscow: Institut Rossiskoi Istorii RAN, 1995 (hereafter Zenzinov, 'Bor'ba'), pp. 12-13.

<sup>13</sup> Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, pp. 283-284.

<sup>14</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Iz pokazanii S. A. Kotliarevskago', p. 127.

<sup>15</sup> Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, pp. 100-129; Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, pp. 39-56; and Golinkov, *Krushenie antisovetskaia podpol'ia*, pp. 104-108, 123-130, 175-183. These sources contain some detail on the activity of the underground between February and July 1918. The best source of Cheka material on the subject is *Krasnaia Kniga VChK* Vol. 2. Moscow: Iz.Pol.Lit, 1989 (hereafter *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*).



also attended meetings, although he was not an influential member. At discussions over the organisation's 'orientation' that is, whether it should be pro-Allied or pro-German, a majority supported making overtures to Germany, indicating that the strongly pro-Allied Astrov was not prominent at this point.<sup>16</sup>

Hitherto, the point at which the 'Nine' formed has not been established. This group, a forerunner of the Right Centre, included three representatives each of the Kadet Party, the Union of Public Figures and the Union of Trade and Industry. According to Rosenberg, the 'Nine' originated in January–February 1918, with Astrov, N. N. Shchepkin and M. V. Sabashnikov representing the Kadets. However, it is likely that there was an earlier version of the organisation, in November 1917, with the same Kadets but with different members of the Union of Public Figures and the Union of Trade and Industry.<sup>17</sup> It is also likely that this earlier group was far more 'conciliationist' in view, as the later group was dominated by Novgorodtsev, who (as mentioned above) was more keen on establishing ties with the reactionary military. In any case, the 'Nine' cemented relations between the non-socialist groups, and it is quite clear that Novgorodtsev played a major role in this. By early March the 'Nine' had expanded, linking with other members of the Union OF Public Figures who had continued to meet, and it had formed the Right Centre, the first significant anti-Bolshevik underground group. During February meetings of the Union of Public Figures had concentrated on the Brest-Litovsk negotiations and their implications for Russia. This manifested itself in terms of the orientation of the group, as mentioned above, the possible structure of a future non-Bolshevik government, and such matters as regional autonomy.<sup>18</sup> A number of academic members of the Union of Public Figures, led by Kotliarevskii, made reports on the peace conditions and the consequences of the loss of Ukraine. The general fear of the dismemberment of the old Russian Empire led all members of the Union of Public Figures and the other groups to oppose the peace negotiations, and the Right Centre can be seen as the

<sup>16</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Pokazaniia N. N. Vinogradskago', pp. 94–95.

<sup>17</sup> Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, pp. 288–289. The group also contained Novgorodtsev, Kotliarevskii and V. A. Stepanov, who presumably represented the UPF although two were prominent Kadets. Ioffe also places the origin of the 'Nine' around February, see *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p. 39. Dumova gives November 1917 as the origin of the 'Nine', with the full membership being: Astrov, N. N. Shchepkin, Sabashnikov (Kadets); 'Belorussov' (the publicist A. S. Beletskii), S. M. Leont'ev, D. M. Shchepkin (UPF); M. M. Fedorov, M. V. Chelakov, A. A. Cherven–Vodali (Trade and Industry). See Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Pokazaniia N. N. Vinogradskago', p. 95.



response of all centre-right organisations to this fear. In addition to the previously mentioned Kadets and members of the Union of Public Figures, the Union of Landowners was represented in the Right Centre by A. V. Krivoshein, M. A. Ershov, V. I. Gurko and I. B. Meisner.<sup>19</sup> Others, who attended on a personal basis rather than as representatives of this or that 'public' group, were P. B. Struve and the brothers G. N. and E. N. Trubetskoi.

The dominating figures in the Right Centre were Novgorodtsev, Krivoshein, Gurko and Leont'ev.<sup>20</sup> It is significant that Novgorodtsev was the most important Kadet in the organisation and that no other Kadets are mentioned as being of importance in first-hand accounts. The other members of the Right Centre dominated, and their right-wing pro-German views soon prevailed over those of the Kadets, who considered that the only future for Russia lay in union with the Allied powers.<sup>21</sup> The Germanophile and reactionary tendencies of the Right Centre resulted in the formation of a counter-balancing 'Left-Centre', as well as the departure in May of almost all prominent Kadets (as detailed below). The Right Centre, then, sacrificed its purpose as a unifying force to its pro-German orientation.<sup>22</sup> However, this orientation was fruitless. Any beliefs that Germany could be persuaded either to act in unison with the political right and occupy Russia, crushing Soviet power in the process, or to grant representatives of the Russian intelligentsia a say in the governing of Ukraine, were misguided. The efforts of Miliukov to represent the Right Centre in Ukraine came to nothing and the old party leader was further estranged from his fellow Kadets as a result of his 'German phase'.<sup>23</sup> As Kotliarevskii put it, it was clear that, having participated in the coup in Ukraine which overthrew the Central Rada, replacing it with the puppet regime of Hetman Skoropadskii, Germany was little interested in the views of representatives of 'Russian society' and merely met with them to inform

<sup>19</sup> *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*, p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Pokazaniia N. N. Vinogradskago', p. 96; *Krasnaia Kniga*, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Iz pokazanii S. A. Kotliarevskago', p. 129. The Kadets also argued with the other representatives over the voting rights of zemstvo representatives in future self-governmental institutions, which the Kadets opposed. See Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Pokazaniia N. N. Vinogradskago', p. 96.

<sup>22</sup> The Right Centre also lost much of its officer following due to a disagreement over military tactics. According to Gurko, the members of the Right Centre planned an armed uprising in the city of Moscow itself. This caused many officers to abandon their affiliation with the Centre in favour of the Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom, led by Boris Savinkov, whose scheme to start revolts in several towns outside of Moscow and then converge on the capital was seen as more likely to succeed. See Gurko, V. I. 'Iz Petrograda cherez Moskvu, Parizh i London v Odessu, 1917-1918gg.', *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii*, Vol. 15 (hereafter 'Iz Petrograda'), pp. 10-11.



them of developments.<sup>24</sup> As regards the possibility of further German intervention on the anti-Bolshevik side, Kotliarevskii held negotiations with Father K. Riezler, one of Ambassador Mirbach's most influential advisors, who, in July, was to narrowly escape being assassinated along with Mirbach by Left-SRs Blumkin and Andreev. Riezler informed Kotliarevskii that the hopes of the Right Centre were illusory. The right in Russia was seen as politically weak and too many Kadets were pro-Allied – why would Germany destroy the Bolsheviks and then hand power over to them? Unfortunately for the Right Centre, the German government, Riezler said, would preserve what it saw as neutrality with regard to the political struggle in Russia.<sup>25</sup> The Right Centre itself was of little import, then, save as a forerunner of the National Centre. The most significant underground anti-Bolshevik organisations were to be stridently pro-Allied in their response to the treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

### *The Union of Regeneration*

In 1918 Miliukov described the Kadet Party as a 'bridge between right and left', and perhaps, from his increasingly right-wing perspective, it was genuinely attempting to be so. However, the only group that could justifiably lay claim to such a role was the Union of Regeneration. By the time of its formation in April 1918, Moscow had replaced Petrograd as the centre of Russian political life. All major political parties had transferred their Central Committees to the sprawling city by the end of February. The UR was born out of the need to create a more progressive inter-party public-minded group than the Right Centre, and thus is occasionally referred to as the 'Left Centre'.<sup>26</sup> It appears likely that this was its intended name in February 1918, when the Right Centre was forming and appeared to comprise all bourgeois elements in Russian society (including the Kadet Party). It was natural for socialist elements in society to form their own organisation. However, the lack of Kadet influence that was

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<sup>23</sup> On Miliukov's 'German phase', see Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, pp. 108–111.

<sup>24</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Iz pokazanii S.N. Kotliarevskago', p. 130.

<sup>25</sup> Mel'gunov, *loc.cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Kerensky, for example, whilst in Britain and France in 1918 referred to the UR as the 'Left Centre' whilst attempting to persuade the Allied governments to render it assistance. He also referred to the UR and the Left Centre in synonymous terms in a letter to the Kadet V. A. Maklakov, his former Ambassador to France. Hoover Institution, Maklakov Collection, Box 8, File 17, p. 1. Boris Savinkov was invited to join the 'Left Centre', but refused as it was 'only of the left'. See GARF f. 5831 (Savinkov), op. 1, d. 578.



apparent by March would seem to explain why representatives of the party Central Committee joined those of the PSR and Popular Socialist party in negotiations in March. The initiative would appear to have come from the Popular Socialists: as one of its founding members, V. A. Miakotin stated, his party wanted the full Central Committees of the Kadet Party and the PSR to meet with theirs in negotiations. This, however, was 'not accepted', according to Miakotin.<sup>27</sup> It is not clear which of the other parties refused such a meeting but it is likely that neither would be able to contemplate this. Neither the Kadet Party nor the PSR were as homogeneous as the much smaller Popular Socialist Party, which had not suffered the same kind of internal wrangling as the others in 1917. In addition, the mere notion of Viktor Chernov sitting around a table with Novgorodtsev and discussing the future of the Russian state is almost preposterous. It was therefore decided that only representatives of the three party Central Committees would hold the negotiations. However, these meetings (held in March in the Moscow flat of Dr. I. N. Kovarskii and attended by members of the Constituent Assembly factions of the three parties) were lengthy and frustrated the Popular Socialists. The predilection of the Russian intelligentsia to indulge in endless debate resulted in a complete lack of solid results and without the central committee of any party being convinced to work out a joint programme of action.<sup>28</sup> According to Mel'gunov, the negotiations between the SRs and Popular Socialists were harmonious, as were those with representatives of *Edinstvo*, although it proved impossible to find a position on the 1917 Constituent Assembly that the SRs and Kadets could agree upon. The results of these negotiations were published in the 11 April edition of the Popular Socialist organ *Narodnoe slovo*.<sup>29</sup>

The creation of the UR was made possible by the patience and persistence of the Popular Socialist Party. The decision was made by prominent Popular Socialists such as Miakotin and Chaikovskii that people could join the organisation on a 'personal' basis. For many who joined, there remained no place in their own party anymore. Prominent SRs such as Avksent'ev and Breshko-Breshkovskaia were no

<sup>27</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 180. Mel'gunov also suggests that the UR was initiated by the NS party. See N. V. Chaikovskii, p. 50. Chaikovskii considered himself to have been one of the founders of the UR, in an unfinished autobiography held in GARF, f. 5805, op. 1, d. 1, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Mel'gunov, *loc.cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Mel'gunov, S. P. 'Istoriia "Soiuza vozrozhdeniia Rossii": Spravka S. P. Mel'gunova', in *Krasnaia Kniga VChK* Vol. 2 (hereafter 'Spravka Mel'gunova'), p. 80.



longer elected Central Committee members, their conduct in 1917 in supporting Kerensky, often at Chernov's expense, having been too much for the party faithful. As for the Kadets, members such as N. N. Shchepkin had been talking of establishing ties with the moderate left since the summer of 1917. Now, wishing to participate in anti-Bolshevik conspiratorial groups and marginalized by their party's association with representatives of the right, the UR was his natural destination. The origins of name 'Union of Regeneration' are unclear, although the testimony of a Union of Public Figures affiliate, N. N. Vinogradskii, indicates that in February members of all anti-Bolshevik organisations were talking of the need to unify their forces under the banner of 'the regeneration of Russia'.<sup>30</sup> It is likely that this phrase was incorporated into the name to appeal to socialists and Kadets alike, as an alternative to the more overtly doctrinaire 'Left Centre'.

Quite a wide range of political representatives attended the negotiations that resulted in the formation of the UR. The main Kadet representatives were Astrov and N. N. Shchepkin. In fact, although other Kadets appear in literature as members of the UR, in truth only these two mattered – all liberals followed their example, and it was they who had to be won over by the socialists if the union was to remain intact.<sup>31</sup> The entire Popular Socialist Central Committee sanctioned the negotiations and its leaders can all be considered to have entered the UR, with Miakotin becoming the chairman. Other socialist groups such as *Edinstvo* and A. N. Potresov's associates had representation at the negotiations and were essentially co-opted into the UR. Different groups of Right-SRs were involved in the talks, including those close to Avksent'ev, and the political friends of so-called 'Volnarodtsev', A. A. Argunov. B. N. Moiseenko also joined shortly after the talks began and was an important link to the military wing of the PSR and the leader of its activity in Moscow, V. M. Zenzinov.<sup>32</sup> These SRs were essentially of one single persuasion, however – they supported the war and wished to fight the Bolsheviks and the Germans in common cause with the Allied powers. However, in joining an inter-party organisation they were in breach of the directive of the Fourth Party Congress and did so not only without party sanction, but

<sup>30</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Pokazaniia N. N. Vinogradskago', p. 96.

<sup>31</sup> Miakotin mentions that N. K. Volkov 'and two others' joined the UR but these men played no serious role in any political developments. See 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 180.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 180–181; Zenzinov, 'Bor'ba', p. 22; Potresov's group of Mensheviks, which had issued its own declaration earlier in 1918, called itself the 'Group for the struggle for the independence and democratic order of Russia'. See Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 50.



also without informing the party hierarchy.<sup>33</sup> The negotiations which resulted in the formation of the UR in mid-April were brief and had tangible results, but although Miakotin credits the 'calmness and persistence' of his old party leader Chaikovskii, the UR was by no means a solid organisation.<sup>34</sup>

The negotiations were successful because the delegates, freed from all party dogma by their own decision to ignore party discipline and enter on a personal basis, were able to make compromises for the sake of agreement that would never have been agreed upon by other party members. As Argunov put it, the UR was a 'bloc', and cannot be seen to have had the strength of a party organisation.<sup>35</sup> The union's strengths lay only in its connections, which existed because of the personal ties of various members. The Kadet members were a potential link with the Volunteer Army of General Alekseev, and were vital in giving the UR a link to more conservative forces within Russia. The SRs had connections with other PSR organisations such as the military wing. The Popular Socialists, in particular Chaikovskii, provided a potential source of support from the co-operative network. The small number of Menshevik members broadened the base of the union and were more familiar with the desires of the workers. Also some of the most significant figures who entered the UR had been deputies in the Duma or had been elected to the Constituent Assembly and, as such, the UR could claim to have connections, however weak, with all democratic institutions in Russia, both Soviet and non-Soviet.<sup>36</sup> The 'personal basis' of the UR gave it strength in one way, then, as it unified, at least in name, a wide selection of politically active and influential figures. However, that union was shaky, as serious issues had been fudged. In particular, the SRs tried time and again to convince other delegates of the sovereignty and efficacy of the 1917 Constituent Assembly. This was not recognised in the programme of the UR, worked out at the first full meeting of its membership. That programme was, in summary:

- 1) Recreation of 'Russia's State Power' and 'broken down statehood', on a democratic basis and in accordance with 'the people's will'.

<sup>33</sup> Mel'gunov, 'Spravka Mel'gunova', p. 80; *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> Miakotin, V.A. 'Iz vospominanii', in Titov (ed.) *Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii*, p. 258.

<sup>35</sup> Argunov, A. *Mezhdur dvumia bol'shevizmami*. Paris: Union, 1919, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Both Astrov and Shchepkin had been elected Duma deputies, as had Avksent'ev, who had also been Chairman of the Peasant's Soviet in 1917. He, and most SRs who joined, had been elected to the Constituent Assembly, as had several Popular Socialists, Chaikovskii representing Viatka.

- 2) Reunification with Russia of those regions 'violently seized from her' and her defence from exterior enemies.
- 3) The reunification of Russia to be brought about in close agreement with Russia's allies, as Russia creates a new army and continues her struggle against Germany.
- 4) This 'new power' created to conduct the struggle will lean for support on organs of local self-government and will, with the liberation of Russia, call a Constituent Assembly to establish a future government.<sup>37</sup>

According to Miakotin, however, the 1917 Constituent Assembly was seen to have been elected under 'abnormal conditions' and could never have any authority.<sup>38</sup>

The formation of the UR was, then, concluded quickly. The full membership at this early stage was: N. I. Astrov, N. N. Shchepkin, N. K. Volkov (Kadets); N. D. Avksent'ev, A. A. Argunov (PSR); A. V. Peshchekhonov, A. A. Titov, N. V. Chaikovskii, V. A. Miakotin (Popular Socialist Party); A. N. Potresov (Right Menshevik).<sup>39</sup>

Had, however, any real achievements been made? The programme agreed upon was vague and the decision to allow membership on a purely individual basis rather than as delegated representatives of the UR's constituent elements meant that in future it would be easy for members to alter their initial positions. In particular, the issue of the 1917 Constituent Assembly was far from over for the SRs and this issue would return to haunt the UR at the most crucial stages in its future. In April, though, the mood of the UR was optimistic and it broadened its scope, attracting new members both in Moscow and in the former capital.

### *The UR in Petrograd*

Between April and May 1918, the UR was to become a significant threat to the Bolshevik regime, as it swelled in number, established connections with cultural activists and increased its propaganda work. Those who entered shortly after the

<sup>37</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 181. See also Argunov, *Mezhdu dvumia bol'shevizmami*, p. 4 and Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> Mel'gunov, *loc.cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 181; Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 50; Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p. 41.



Union's formation included L. M. Barmen, V. V. Volk-Karachevskii and S. P. Mel'gunov (Popular Socialist Party), and M. V. Vishniak, I. I. Bunakov-Fundaminskii and B. N. Moiseenko (PSR).<sup>40</sup> But the most significant new member was General V. Boldyrev, a non-party figure whose sympathies with the PSR in 1917 were well-known but whose behaviour in 1918, as characterised rather incisively by one Soviet historian, was 'somewhere between the Popular Socialists and the Kadets'.<sup>41</sup> Pitrim Sorokin, the eminent sociologist, also claims to have been a member, but is not mentioned in any other memoir account or in Cheka material. This is possibly explained by Sorokin, who claims that ill health prevented him from active participation.<sup>42</sup> At the same time SR military circles and officer organisations in Petrograd became aware of the formation of the UR and the result was the formation there of a UR cell.

A number of secret officer organisations existed in Petrograd in early 1918, and at least one had contacted the local SR military organisation led by Semenov in March with the suggestion of working together. This group, however, considered it a mistake to conclude an agreement with the Allied powers, and preferred a union with Germany, which prevented any possibility of forming a broader organisation with SR involvement.<sup>43</sup> The meeting of officer groups with representatives of moderate socialism did occur, however, in March, when Popular Socialist V. I. Ignat'ev was approached by a young officer named L. A. Kenigisser to become the political head of his non-party organisation, which had links to two generals, Suvorov and Boldyrev. When the latter moved to Moscow to join the UR, Ignat'ev decided to invite Suvorov to be the military leader of his organisation, to ally it with the UR, and to act in its name.<sup>44</sup> The UR in Petrograd was, then, far more military based than its Moscow counterpart, originating as it did with secret officer organisations rather than political parties.

The Petrograd organisation was to form cells in many different parts of the city. The agreed leadership of the UR was Ignat'ev, General Suvorov, General A. I. Verkhovskii (a former Minister of War in the Provisional Government) and Colonel

<sup>40</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 184; Zenzinov, 'Bor'ba', p. 22.

<sup>41</sup> Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p. 41.

<sup>42</sup> Sorokin, *Leaves From a Russian Diary*, p. 136.

<sup>43</sup> Semenov, *Voennaia i boevaia rabota*, p. 23.

<sup>44</sup> Ignat'ev, V. I. 'Vospominaniia V. I. Ignat'eva', *Krasnaia Kniga VChK* Vol. 2 (hereafter 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', pp. 95-96; Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 204.

Postrikov, who represented the local SR military organisation and wished to work under a 'general flag'. The city was then divided up into spheres of influence. The Vasil'evskii and Vyborg SR cells were placed under UR command, the latter's Petrogradskaia and Nevskii cells being subordinated to those of the SRs. A few days later SR Central Committee member A. R. Gots, who had remained in the city when the committee transferred to Moscow, joined the organisation in order to increase the SR influence in the leadership, despite having clear misgivings on working with the UR.<sup>45</sup> It would be difficult, then, to list Gots as a *bona fide* UR member, as did a major Soviet source on the subject.<sup>46</sup> The differences between the centre-rightism of Gots and the extreme right of the PSR, as personified by Avksent'ev and Argunov, were not to be resolved in 1918. Once the UR and SR organisations had linked up, they began to obtain money from the Moscow UR and discuss anti-Bolshevik activity.<sup>47</sup> It was decided to develop 'democratic armed forces' in different parts of the city and to make arrangements for possible anti-Bolshevik uprisings. At this point Ignat'ev met with Semenov, described by the former as a 'fanatic'. Semenov's desire for rapid activity was in opposition to the more cautious Ignat'ev's wish to rise up only at the time of rumoured Allied landings, and the SR had a distaste for the more moderate organisation, which he saw as being too right wing. However, it is clear from Semenov's memoirs that the SR organisations were financially subsidised by the UR during April and May.<sup>48</sup>

Mel'gunov is highly critical of the memoirs of both Semenov and Ignat'ev, believing that the unification of the SR and UR military work was simply unbelievable. The PSR was split, Mel'gunov contends, between those who entered the UR and those who wished to fight for the cause of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>49</sup> However much truth there may have been in this point, it would be over-simplistic to characterise that split as definite and irrevocable. Mel'gunov's interpretation of both sets of memoirs is rather clouded. The UR and SR organisations in Petrograd were far from unified; rather, they worked together and made arrangement for mutual benefit. As such, his characterisation of the relations between the SRs of the UR and those of the Constituent Assembly as 'flimsy and casual' is far from contradicted by the

<sup>45</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', pp. 96–98.

<sup>46</sup> Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 203.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p. 205; Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', p. 99.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 99–100; Semenov, *Voennaia i boevaia rabota*, p. 24.



memoirs of Ignat'ev and Semenov.<sup>50</sup> In fact, the links between the UR and the PSR in Petrograd were no stronger than that which existed between the Moscow organisations as a result of the closeness between Zenzinov and many UR members, in particular Moiseenko. Of course, no uprising actually took place in Petrograd, as the UR planned to concentrate on areas to the east and the north of Russia's two capitals, and no mutual plans were ever made by Ignat'ev's forces and those of Semenov. Semenov, however, continued to plan insurrections in Petrograd throughout the summer, turning to terrorism and planning the assassination of a number of prominent Bolsheviks once his group had been decimated by the Cheka.<sup>51</sup>

### *Allied Assistance and the Growth of the UR*

At the same time as the UR was linking up with the military wing of the PSR in Petrograd, the central organisation was doing the same in Moscow. Prior to April 1918, the military work of the PSR in the new capital had been weak, and the Central Committee decided to bolster this by linking with non-party organisations led by Colonels Tkachenko and Makhin.<sup>52</sup> Zenzinov had previously constructed a military organisation consisting mainly of workers and demobilised soldiers, but had become dissatisfied with their work and was by now heavily involved in recruiting former officers.<sup>53</sup> Makhin, in fact, obtained a post in the Red Army and was a useful source of information for the SR organisation – even, according to Zenzinov, playing an important role in damaging the efforts of the Red Army to defend Ufa from the advancing Czechoslovak Legion.<sup>54</sup> At the same time as he was bringing in these officers to his organisation, Zenzinov was in constant contact with the UR, 'not so much for reasons of an organisational nature as much as personal'.<sup>55</sup> The connections between the UR and the Moscow PSR military wing were strengthened when Zenzinov's close friend Moiseenko became a full UR member, and took charge of the organisation's military work, using UR money to finance most of the activity of the

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<sup>49</sup> Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>50</sup> Mel'gunov, *loc.cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Semenov, *Voenniaia i boevaia rabota*, pp. 28–38. See above, p. 41 (n. 7) for a note of caution on Semenov, whose memoirs may indeed be unreliable.

<sup>52</sup> Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 207.

<sup>53</sup> Zenzinov, 'Bor'ba', pp. 16–18.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

officer groups associated with both himself and Zenzinov.<sup>56</sup> It was hoped by the political centre of the UR that these officers would go on to create a mass army with which to fight Soviet power.<sup>57</sup>

The work of the UR now also began to encompass propaganda. This was achieved through the connections of some of the group's senior figures with the intellectual society called 'Culture and Freedom', which was chaired by Maksim Gorky.<sup>58</sup> Despite Gorky's political leanings and his wish to preserve the neutrality of the group, it came to be numerically dominated by moderate socialists and included UR members Chaikovskii and Potresov. Others close to the UR (later to become members via this connection) were the Mensheviks V. N. Rozanov, L. M. Bramson and V. O. Levitskii and the Popular Socialist S. F. Znamenskii.<sup>59</sup> Culture and Freedom attempted to portray the UR in the pages of its bulletin as a bastion of Russia's civil society, which had as its goal the education of the masses and the 'infusing [of] the people with state consciousness'.<sup>60</sup> The UR and Culture and Freedom were also involved in the organisation of public meetings in late spring-summer 1918, beginning with a discussion on 19 May, which was significantly entitled 'Will Russia be Regenerated?' arranged by Rozanov and Potresov and drawing a crowd of 1800.<sup>61</sup> It was not until May, when the UR had become closer to Allied representatives and had made agreements with other underground organisations regarding future anti-Bolshevik activity, that the UR began to publish a newspaper, *Vozrozhdenie*. Sorokin, recently returned to Moscow after a period of convalescence, was heavily involved in this publication, the first edition of which was prevented from being circulated by Bolshevik agents. Subsequent editions were circulated, however: one, most likely published on 28 May 1918, contained an article by Kerensky on the Kornilov Affair.<sup>62</sup> In total, seventeen issues of the paper appeared in May–June 1918. The paper was a

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22; Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, pp. 207–208.

<sup>57</sup> Argunov, *Mezhdru dvumia bol'shevizmami*, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> The full name of the organisation was *Kul'tura i svoboda: Kul'turno-prosvetitel'noe obshchestvo v pamiat' 27-ogo fevralia 1917 g.* See Rougle, C. 'Intellectuals Organize: Gor'kij's "Culture and Freedom" Society of 1918', *Scando-Slavica* Vol. 26 (1980) (hereafter 'Intellectuals Organize'), pp. 85–104.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 88–90.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

<sup>61</sup> Rougle, *loc.cit.* Rougle translates the title of the discussion, 'Vozrodit'sia li Rossiia?' as 'Will Russia be Reborn?'. Out of context, this is a better translation, but the translation in the text above has been chosen to emphasise the significance of the word 'Vozrodit'sia' as a link with the UR.

<sup>62</sup> Sorokin, *Leaves From a Russian Diary*, pp. 143; Public Record Office (London), FO 371/3322/98604. Ward (Moscow) – FO, 28 May 1918.



forerunner of the émigré journal of the same name, with the SR M. Vishniak, who had recently joined the UR, editing *Vozrozhdenie* both in Russia and in emigration.<sup>63</sup>

All this begs the question: how was this work financed? Allied involvement in supporting the anti-Bolshevik underground is a rather controversial issue. Soviet historiography consistently attempted to demonstrate the importance of Allied money, in order to imply that the formation of the anti-Bolshevik movement was only made possible by the intervention of the Allied powers.<sup>64</sup> This does the UR some disservice. There is little doubt, for instance, that the co-operative network (in particular the consumer's co-operatives) were dominated by Popular Socialists and Right SRs, and that Chaikovskii managed to obtain funding for the UR from this source.<sup>65</sup> However, UR members do not deny in memoirs that significant funding was obtained from British and French sources as early as April 1918. There were essentially two phases to the Allied involvement. The initial phase involved the contact between the underground and representatives of the Allied missions, while the latter were still based in Moscow, and resulted in the expansion of work as described above.<sup>66</sup> A second phase came later, after the transfer of the Allied diplomatic community to Vologda, and involved a more detailed plan of action in concert with the other main anti-Bolshevik underground groups, the Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom, and the National Centre.

### *The Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom*

The Allied representatives in Russia held negotiations with all three organisations in tandem and regarded them as parts of one movement, despite the fact that one of those organisations, the Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom had little to do with the other two. The reason for this is quite simple: the leader of the Union was none other than the maverick Boris Savinkov, a man ostracised from the PSR after his provocative and suspicious role in the Kornilov Affair, and who had

<sup>63</sup> Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 203.

<sup>64</sup> For examples of this see *ibid.*, p. 205; Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p.50; Dumova *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, pp. 111–112, 124–125.

<sup>65</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz vospominanii', in Titov (ed.), *Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii*, p. 259; Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 58; Radkey, *The Sickie Under the Hammer*, pp. 336, 367.

<sup>66</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 188. Allied assistance to the anti-Bolshevik underground

allied himself with the Volunteer Army of General Alekseev after the October Revolution.<sup>67</sup> Savinkov had headed for the Don shortly after the October Revolution to attempt to assist Kornilov, Kaledin and Alekseev as a political advisor and had entered the latter's Civil Council as a representative of the 'left' (a role for which Argunov had also been considered).<sup>68</sup> It is difficult to say with any certainty just how negative Alekseev's attitude to the PSR was after October, and it is not clear just how well he understood that the party had many splinter groups that rendered the label 'SR' almost meaningless. He did say, unsurprisingly, that he would never work with Chernov. However, he was, it seems, willing to work with Argunov, who was on the far right of the party, and even more with Savinkov, whose shift to the right had taken him outside the party ranks.<sup>69</sup> Alekseev's position on this is important when considering his possible candidacy as a member of the Ufa Directory later in 1918. It would seem that Alekseev was willing to work with the moderate left if it was absolutely necessary, then. However any agreements made with Alekseev regarding the Civil Council were considered by Savinkov to have been a mere 'paper victory', and he doubted the actual ability of the general to forge a real working relationship with the moderate left.<sup>70</sup> This 'paper victory' was reflected by the weak influence of the SRs on the Don at the end of 1917. Savinkov himself was dismayed at the lack of active work being undertaken to carry the fight to the Bolsheviks, and quickly began to view the Don as a place of intrigue rather than of action.<sup>71</sup> Savinkov attempted to increase the influence on the Civil Council of the extreme right wing of socialism, and negotiated for the inclusion of Plekhanov and Chaikovskii. However, he did not succeed in meeting with these men and negotiating their entry, and socialist influence on the Don dwindled away to nothing when Savinkov, somewhat disillusioned, returned to Petrograd in January 1918, from where (shortly after) he moved on to Moscow.<sup>72</sup>

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and its impact on the tactics of individual organisations is detailed below, pp. 72–74.

<sup>67</sup> The definitive work on Savinkov's extraordinary life is Spence, R. B. *Boris Savinkov: Renegade on the Left*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. See pp. 177–185 for more detail of his activity on the Don.

<sup>68</sup> Fediuk, *Belye*, p. 24; Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 243.

<sup>69</sup> Lembich, M. *Veliki pechalnik* (1919), p. 12, cited in Vladimirova, *loc.cit.*

<sup>70</sup> Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, translated trial testimony (hereafter 'trial testimony'), p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> *Delo Borisa Savinkova: So statei B. Savinkova "Pochemy ia priznal sovetskuiu vlast"*. Moscow: Gosizdat, 1924 (hereafter *Delo Borisa Savinkova*), p. 30.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 32–33; Fediuk, *Belye*, p. 25.



On Savinkov's return to Moscow, he was appalled by the parlous state of the PSR and the fact that it had been so irresolute in defending the Constituent Assembly.<sup>73</sup> For Savinkov, clearly, the PSR had abandoned its heritage as a radical organisation capable of political terror and had become a slightly more left-wing version of the liberal party. Therefore, he decided to enter into discussions for a possible alliance with secret officer organisations. However, those organisations that he encountered desired a return to a constitutional monarchy and even considered entering into relations with German representatives in the city.<sup>74</sup> This was of no use to Savinkov, a pronounced Francophile, who could only ever have contemplated entering a pro-Allied organisation. Savinkov also saw the UR as too left-wing. He desired 'a sacred union between the left and right parts of society for the sake of the salvation of the Fatherland'. So, despite having been apparently invited to join the organisation in its early stages, he refused the offer.<sup>75</sup> In March, due to a lack of alternatives, he decided to form his own organisation.

Earlier that month the former tsarist artillery officer Colonel A. P. Perkhurov had arrived in Moscow and met Savinkov through a mutual acquaintance, a Dr D. V. Koshelev. Savinkov struck Perkhurov as an 'intelligent, energetic and decisive lover of the fatherland', and after two or three meetings the two men decided to work together.<sup>76</sup> The pair decided that it would be necessary to form an army that was small but disciplined, similar to that created in South Russia by Alekseev. For this, it would be necessary to attract a number of tsarist officers. Here Savinkov's connections with the Don were useful, as several officers who had travelled north to Moscow joined the new organisation. Having formed the Union, the two leaders worked out a basic political platform. This was, in summary:

- 1) The necessity of the transfer of power to a Constituent Assembly, once such an Assembly had been correctly elected.
- 2) The Land should go to the people.

<sup>73</sup> GARF, f. 5831 (Savinkov), op. 1, d. 578, 'Memuara Borisa Savinkova – Soiuz Zashchity Rodina i Svoboda', 4 September 1919. Hereafter 'Memuara Savinkova'.

<sup>74</sup> *loc.cit.*

<sup>75</sup> *loc.cit.*

<sup>76</sup> Perkhurov, A. P. 'Vospominaniia General-Maiora Perkhurova', *Iaroslavskoe vosstanie. Iiul' 1918* Moscow: Posev, 1998 (hereafter 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova'), p. 52.

- 3) The organisation should be devoted to the interests of all the peoples who make up the Russian Empire.<sup>77</sup>

The implication in this very basic platform, of course, was that political measures could only be correctly undertaken under conditions of civil peace. As Savinkov put it at his trial in 1924, 'Our programme was very elementary, because it was not a political party, but a fighting organisation having a definite, purely military objective: the overthrow of your [Bolshevik] authority and the convocation of a Constituent Assembly.'<sup>78</sup> It is quite clear that by allying himself with Alekseev, Savinkov was giving tacit approval to a highly centralised and concentrated power structure – most likely a one-man dictatorship. It is also quite likely, though, that Savinkov hoped to create a power base for himself in the north which would increase his influence in the White movement.

Early members of the Union included Colonel Stradetskii, Colonel Gopper, Colonel Geier, Captain Klement'ev, the military doctor Grigor'ev, and the journalist Dikgof-Derental. The organisation was weak at the beginning, both financially and numerically. It was suggested that each member attempt to bring in at least four more people, although the organisation could barely feed its existing members. Such matters improved in April, when Savinkov began to obtain funding from the Don and his organisation was thus able to establish a headquarters for itself and expand its activity.<sup>79</sup> This funding was, according to one Soviet account, based on the understanding that Savinkov was to act in the name of the Volunteer Army in the north, as he later did, with Alekseev remaining in charge of the south.<sup>80</sup> The command in Moscow, which occupied a small flat, was placed under Perkhurov and Stradetskii, with each member of the command being designated a specific role – for example, Grigor'ev was placed in charge of intelligence, and Dikgof-Derental was trusted with the important role of establishing relations with the Allies. By the end of April, contact with the Allies had been made and, along with the UR and the National Centre, the Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom began to arrange some kind of plan to act in concert with the Allies to fight against their common enemies: Germany and Soviet power.

<sup>77</sup> Perkhurov, *loc.cit.*; Savinkov, 'Memuara Savinkova'.

<sup>78</sup> Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, trial testimony, p. 12.

<sup>79</sup> Savinkov, 'Memuara Savinkova'.

<sup>80</sup> Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 245.



## *The National Centre*

By May, many leading Kadets had realised that the Germanophile tendencies of the Right Centre made it impossible for them to remain in that organisation. Thus, the laser major pro-Allied underground organisation was created quite simply – by the exit from the Right Centre of Astrov, N. N. Shchepkin and those close to them. During April, discussions in the Right Centre and in Kadet Party Central Committee meetings showed that there were clear differences between the two bodies that were irreconcilable. The Kadets were in favour of the recreation of an Eastern Front, and even approved Japanese intervention to achieve it. The Right Centre was utterly opposed to both measures. Astrov gained the approval of his fellow party members on these matters when he spoke in favour of them but was rebuffed by other members of the Right Centre. As a result, there was clearly no longer any place for him or others such as Stepanov and Novgorodtsev in the Centre.<sup>81</sup> It is also clear that Astrov had decided that the Kadet Party was not suited to his needs. In forming the National Centre, Astrov implied that his party was not functioning effectively as an anti-Bolshevik organisation. For Shchepkin, entry into the National Centre was not a party issue. He had practically given up on party work and had joined the UR shortly after its formation. Shchepkin was the only Kadet in the group at this point. In May, when the National Centre began to split away from the Right Centre, Shchepkin saw this as the ‘utter demise’ of the Kadet Party.<sup>82</sup> This is probably due to Shchepkin’s loss of faith in strict party organisations and what appeared to be a final divorce between his kind of liberalism and that of Miliukov, who had dominated the party from its inception and who continued to associate with the Right Centre in Ukraine. Miliukov later claimed that the National Centre was created as a separate entity to the Kadet Party on the insistence of the Allied representatives in Moscow – something which Astrov denied.<sup>83</sup> Shchepkin’s testimony suggests, then, that the Kadet domination of the National Centre was not the original intention of the National Centre’s leaders, Astrov, Shchepkin and M. M. Fedorov, but that the Centre provided a refuge for liberals who no longer knew which way to turn. This is particularly true once a Party

<sup>81</sup> Mel’gunov (ed.), ‘Iz pokazanii Kotliarevskago’, p. 132.

<sup>82</sup> Shchepkin, N. N. ‘Istoricheskaja spravka N. N. Shchepkina’, *Krasnaia Kniga VChK* Vol. 2 (hereafter ‘Istoricheskaja spravka’), p. 197.

<sup>83</sup> Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p. 46.

Conference, held on 27 to 29 May 27 to define the orientation of the party, decreed it 'unacceptable' for party members to associate with Germany.<sup>84</sup>

The National Centre, then, began as a small group of individual liberals in May and grew rapidly in June when former Kadet members of the Right Centre (such as Cherven-Vodali, Chelishchev and Kartashev) followed Astrov. The National Centre was a liberal organisation – an organisation made up of individuals who still adhered to most of the Kadet Party's fundamental tenets, the most important of which was the strict belief in the inviolability of the Russian state and opposition to regional independence. Their hostility to the German occupation of Ukraine, just like their objection to granting independence to 'Little Russia' later in 1918, was based on this belief.<sup>85</sup> That the National Centre was more than a mere Kadet splinter group is made clear by the entrance into the core of the organisation by D. N. Shipov, who acted as Chairman from the early days of the National Centre until his arrest in early 1919.<sup>86</sup> Shipov, a former Octoborist, was the main National Centre figure not to have come from the Kadet Party, although other non-Kadets joined the National Centre, (including O. P. Gerasimov; Professor V. N. Murav'ev and N. K. Kol'tsov).<sup>87</sup> Shipov and Fedorov were the most fervent supporters of the Allied powers in the organisation, believing their war against Germany to be a struggle against violence and imperialism. A consequence of this influence in the National Centre was that much of its early activity was to propagandise against the Right Centre and work out the attitude of the National Centre towards Ukraine.<sup>88</sup> The latter was a pet project of Fedorov, who considered the collapse of the Skoropadskii regime to be inevitable and intended that the National Centre should be involved in the running of Ukraine after this collapse. Fedorov desired the formation of a non-separatist Ukrainian government which would make use of Allied assistance in constructing the new order.<sup>89</sup> From this and from the later exodus of most of the National Centre to South Russia, it is clear that the organisation's leaders believed that Ukraine and the Caucasus would serve as the base from which to conduct the reconquest of European Russia, and there is little

<sup>84</sup> Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 113.

<sup>85</sup> See below, pp. 202–204.

<sup>86</sup> *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*, p. 39.

<sup>87</sup> *loc.cit.* As with the Union of Public Figures, the non-party members were largely from the academic or business communities.

<sup>88</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Iz pokazanii Kotliarevskii', pp. 133–134.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 134–135.



doubt that Fedorov intended any post-Skoropadskii government to be drawn from the ranks of the National Centre.<sup>90</sup>

The early political debates of the National Centre were rather premature. In discussion on agrarian reforms, Shipov made clear his views on the evils of private property and his preference of a return to the *obshchina*. However, Shchepkin was very keen on avoiding disagreement with the UR, of which he was also a member, and it was generally agreed that such thorny questions should be left for later on. Kotliarevskii made a report on the status of Ukraine, recommending that state unity be maintained, but also stressing the need for a number of progressive measures. Ukrainian was to be recognised as an official language (along with Russian) in that area, and education was to be locally regulated. Although this was generally agreed upon, certain individuals, Shchepkin included, were concerned that this would encourage more nationalism in the regions. Further reports by Kotliarevskii suggested that the utter defeat of Germany was not in Russian interests, as the Central Powers were needed to counterbalance Anglo-French hegemony in Europe. Again, many leading figures in the organisation did not entirely agree with this judgement.<sup>91</sup> But most of this early discussion was of an academic nature and was soon swept under the carpet. However, the discussions reveal that the National Centre was far from a homogeneous group, and some of these fissures would reappear the following year. In the meantime, organisational unity and agreement with both the other underground groups and the Allies were paramount, as it became necessary to obtain financial help from them.

### *The Allies and the anti-Bolshevik Underground*

Representatives of the Allied powers in Russia had relations with the anti-Bolshevik underground from April 1918 onwards, once it became clear that negotiations with Trotsky over possible Allied assistance in the formation of the Red Army in order to resist Germany were more likely to fail than succeed. The unofficial British representative, R. H. Bruce Lockhart, mentioned contacting anti-Bolshevik groups in diplomatic correspondence in April, and has been linked with granting financial

<sup>90</sup> For example, Fedorov suggested to Kotliarevskii that he might be a suitable Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of such a government. See *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>91</sup> Mel'gunov, 'Iz pokazanii Kotliarevskago', pp. 136–139.

assistance to a counter-revolutionary 'Centre' at that time.<sup>92</sup> It is likely that Lockhart met representatives of different groups in April, including officer organisations, but it is almost certain that he met with representatives of the UR and Savinkov's Union. Memoir accounts by members of both refer to Allied assistance in April. By this time, there were a limited number of Allied representatives in Moscow, the diplomatic missions having moved from Petrograd to Vologda in late March. In April, Lockhart was working in close contact with the French military attaché, General Lavergne, and it is likely that he served as a point of contact between the underground and the French, who were to make promises that were not kept.

During April, the Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom conducted negotiations with Allied representatives in Moscow. Perkhurov believed that Dikgof-Derental had contact with the Allies before the decimation of the organisation in May by a series of arrests. However, the journalist was unable to convince the Allies of the viability of the organisation. As a kind of test, the Union carried out some reconnaissance work for the Allies on the strength of Germany's position in Moscow at that time. This was successfully completed by Colonel Brede and led to 'more solid negotiations'. By late April, as a result of the influx of new resources (both from Alekseev and from the Allied representatives) the Union increased in number, commanding a force of around two thousand men in Moscow and more in the towns that ringed the capital.<sup>93</sup> The Union, in fact, had connections with both British and French representatives. Contact with the French is clear from Savinkov's testimony and by French sources such as the diary of the diplomat Count Louis de Robien, who, writing in mid-May, regretted the way his government 'played' with Savinkov while shunning General Horvath in the Far East because of his reactionary nature.<sup>94</sup> The Union also had contacts in Petrograd with the British naval attaché, Captain Cromie.<sup>95</sup> Cromie was, in April, concerned about Germany being able to make use of the Baltic Fleet, and once negotiations with Trotsky to

<sup>92</sup> Debo, R. 'Lockhart Plot or Dzerzhinskii Plot?', *Journal of Modern History* Vol. 43 (1971) No. 3, pp. 428–430.

<sup>93</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', pp. 54–55. Savinkov estimated that these forces totalled around five thousand men. Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, trial testimony, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> De Robien, L. 'Dnevnik diplomati v Rossii', in Goldin, V. I. (ed.) *Zabroshennye v nebytie: Interventsiia na Russkom Severe (1918–1919) glazami ee uchastnikov*. Arkhangel'sk: Pravda Severa, 1997 (hereafter *Zabroshennye v nebytie*), p. 173.

<sup>95</sup> Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 247. Vladimirova quotes a memoir by Savinkov (entitled 'Bor'ba s bol'shevikami'), sadly now unavailable, saying that the Union was funded mainly by the French and the Czechs.



scuttle the fleet were clearly not leading to direct action by the Bolsheviks, he began to form his own plans.<sup>96</sup> According to Savinkov, the Russians Cromie planned to employ to wreck the Baltic Fleet, a plan involving some considerable financial outlay, were affiliated with his Union.<sup>97</sup> Savinkov's other plans in April included the arrangement of the assassination of Lenin and Trotsky, in which he may have had French approval, although Savinkov's trial testimony is vague on the subject.<sup>98</sup> None of these plans came to fruition. The British War Cabinet was afraid that Cromie's plans would force the Bolsheviks into the arms of Germany once and for all, and the Union's intentions, which also included an uprising in Moscow set for 1–2 June, were halted by the arrest in mid-May of a significant portion of its membership.<sup>99</sup> Some officer groups completely disappeared, and the Union took until early June to recover.<sup>100</sup> Any plans to conduct an insurrection in Moscow were permanently shelved, due to Savinkov's belief that Germany would soon occupy the city.<sup>101</sup>

Meanwhile, the UR was also in contact with the Allies, for much the same reason as Savinkov. Contact had been established in March with Ambassador Noulens, prior to his move to Vologda. Later, following Noulens's departure, relations with the French were maintained through Consul Grenard, who, according to Zenzinov, conducted the negotiations 'in the name of all the Allies'.<sup>102</sup> These negotiations were conducted on behalf of the UR by Chaikovskii and Avksent'ev, who had both spent time in exile in France, as well as by General Boldyrev, who was presumably involved in the more military aspects of the talks.<sup>103</sup> In April, the subject of an Allied landing in order to assist the UR in its struggle with Germany was discussed and the UR laid down a number of conditions under which Russian society would find this acceptable:

- 1) At a future peace conference, Russia's sovereignty and territory would not be diminished.

<sup>96</sup> PRO CAB 24, GT 4344. Admiralty paper entitled 'Future of the Russian Fleets,' dated 25 April; PRO CAB 23: War Cabinet 409, 11/5/18.

<sup>97</sup> GARF, f. 5831 (Savinkov), op. 1, d. 170.

<sup>98</sup> GARF, *loc.cit*; Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, trial testimony, pp. 14, 17–18; *Delo Borisa Savinkova*, p. 39;

Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 246.

<sup>99</sup> Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsilaistov' kapitalistami*, p. 248.

<sup>100</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', p. 55.

<sup>101</sup> GARF, f. 5831 (Savinkov), op. 1, d. 578.

<sup>102</sup> Zenzinov, 'Bor'ba', p. 23.

<sup>103</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', p. 102.

- 2) No further burdens would be placed on Russia to add to those already being suffered.
- 3) There would be no interference in any internal affairs which arose in the anti-Bolshevik movement.<sup>104</sup>

Such conditions, which accompanied a military plan by the UR, were considered to be most acceptable by the Allies.<sup>105</sup> By May, the UR had also established relations with the British, via Lockhart. It was here that the UR leaders began to use their connections with Kerensky. Kerensky met Lockhart in Moscow on 16 May, claiming to represent all socialists groups in Russia. He attempted to arrange a trip to Britain in order to negotiate personally with David Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau. However, at this point Lockhart was instructed to discourage Kerensky.<sup>106</sup> Kerensky was not deterred, however, and left Moscow for Murmansk on 25 May, disguised as a Serb and carrying a Serbian passport in the name of Miliutin Markovich.<sup>107</sup> Due to an error in communication, the British believed that Kerensky's destination was France and allowed him into Britain expecting him to leave quickly. Kerensky proceeded (despite the decidedly lukewarm reception afforded him by Britain, France and the expatriate Russian community in both countries) to raise his profile and attempt to negotiate on behalf of the UR, becoming rather a thorn in the side of the British and French governments during the summer.<sup>108</sup> The British even attempted to send Kerensky to America, in order to rid themselves of someone who was seen by both Britain and France as an unwanted nuisance, but to their dismay, the American government also did not want him.<sup>109</sup> Britain, in fact, came to regard Kerensky as a liability, but did not want to facilitate his return to Russia for fear of becoming publicly associated with him. Despite his increasingly hysterical pleas, Kerensky was kept in Britain in 1918.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', pp. 188–189.

<sup>105</sup> Argunov, *Mezhdv dvumia bol'shevizmami*, p. 7.

<sup>106</sup> PRO FO 371/3322/98604; Lockhart (Moscow) – FO, sent 16 May, received 21 May. The reply, FO – Lockhart, sent 23 May, reveals the Foreign Office belief that, in Russia, Kerensky was 'more disliked than the Bolsheviks'.

<sup>107</sup> PRO FO 371/3322, files 6504, 96655.

<sup>108</sup> PRO FO 371/3322, files 110319, 111351 111969, 116014 118116, 118995 contain examples of Kerensky's behaviour and the reaction of the British and French.

<sup>109</sup> PRO FO 371/3322/115163.

<sup>110</sup> PRO FO 371/3322, files 158260, 167917, 173076.



It is clear from Kerensky's humiliating experiences in Britain and France that the Allied representatives in Russia were establishing relations with the anti-Bolshevik underground on their own initiative, without keeping their superiors in London and Paris fully informed. It was perhaps due to this that relations were so cordial and that the UR's programme was accepted. In fact, according to Miakotin, relations with the Allies were perfectly harmonious until the National Centre also began to meet with them.<sup>111</sup> Due to the fact that Astrov and Shchepkin were members of both the UR and the National Centre, an agreement arose between the two in late May to early June that to 'avoid separate steps' and to support 'united Russian affairs', negotiations with the Allies should be conducted by representatives of both groups. This necessitated some sort of agreement between the two on their future plans and precipitated a series of talks.

#### *The Union of Regeneration and the National Centre*

The negotiations between the UR and the National Centre may have been prompted by the need to present a united front to the Allies but the agreement forged between the two organisations affected the political future of the entire anti-Bolshevik struggle in 1918 and are the most important part of this first phase of activity. According to Astrov, the agreement of a common platform was insisted upon by the Allies.<sup>112</sup> However, Allied aid was not the sole factor in motivating the UR to converse with the National Centre. Miakotin, the UR Chairman, later recalled that the UR was concerned about the number of groups that had sprung up 'like mushrooms' during the spring. The opinion of the UR on these groups, which consisted mainly of officers, some of which were insignificant and led by 'superficial braggers', was that they could do danger to the underground by arranging too many uncoordinated risings which would be easily put down by the Red Army and the Cheka, and would endanger the whole anti-Bolshevik movement. A broader, more considered plan of action was deemed necessary, and the intention of the UR was to unify as many forces as possible under a general platform, to transfer these forces to areas close to the proposed Allied landings, and to wait for the right moment. Their hope was that

<sup>111</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 189.

<sup>112</sup> Astrov, N. I. 'Moskovskaia organizatsiia', p. 19, cited in Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 126.

the uprisings would coincide with the Allied landings: the Red forces would then be split and confused, and a whole area of Russia would be liberated from Soviet power.<sup>113</sup> The negotiations were, therefore, prompted by two concerns: to persuade the Allies that the anti-Bolshevik camp was serious and capable of independent action; and to prevent any premature actions on the part of others that might make the execution of the UR's own plans more hazardous.

The talks, which began on or shortly after 1 June 1918, focussed on the future construction of an all-Russian government which would unify the anti-Bolshevik camp and conduct the military struggle against Soviet power and Germany from its intended base in Siberia.<sup>114</sup> Both groups saw the necessity of creating such a government. The UR had decided during its formation that a Directory of five men should have all power concentrated in its hands. This Directory would operate as a collegiate dictatorship, important decisions being made according to a simple majority vote. Subordinate ministries would conduct the business in the name of the Directory but would be under the constant control of the supreme organ of power.<sup>115</sup> The National Centre had, from its inception, been keen on acting in unity with the Volunteer Army.<sup>116</sup> This fact and the involvement of such conservative figure as Stepanov and Novgorodtsev meant that the desire for a one-man dictatorship for the transitional period was strong in the National Centre.<sup>117</sup> However, both groups were willing to compromise, as shown by the attitude of Miakotin. When discussing his possible involvement in a union between the UR and the National Centre, Stepanov made it clear to the UR Chairman that he was a monarchist. Miakotin's reply, characteristic of a Popular Socialist in its emphasis on accommodation rather than discord, was that the UR wished to represent various political positions.<sup>118</sup> Chaikovskii himself was not afraid of political union with the forces of the right, and stated that the slogans of the Volunteer Army were 'acceptable to democracy'.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, he spoke out most decisively against a dictatorship, according to

<sup>113</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 192.

<sup>114</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', p. 105. Ignat'ev travelled from Petrograd to Moscow to participate in the talks, arriving on 1 June.

<sup>115</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 193.

<sup>116</sup> Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 121.

<sup>117</sup> Shchepkin, 'Istoricheskaia spravka', p. 197.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>119</sup> Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 55.



Miakotin.<sup>120</sup> The expressions of Avksent'ev were also very important at this point and it became clear that there would be no UR agreement on the basis of one-man rule.<sup>121</sup> According to the most reliable Soviet historian of the Kadets, the National Centre decided to compromise their own beliefs 'for the sake of achieving an agreement'.<sup>122</sup>

What compromises did the UR have to offer? The main concession to the Kadets was the agreement to reduce the size of the directory from five men to three.<sup>123</sup> This compromise is crucial, as Astrov understood the agreement to be that one member of the Directory would be a leading military figure (probably General Alekseev), and that the remaining two members would be prominent representatives of Russian society, one of them a socialist and one a non-socialist.<sup>124</sup> This was worked out after the second meeting between the two groups, as it is clear from the memoirs of V. I. Ignat'ev that UR was intractable over the issue of a future five-man directory at the first two meetings in early June. It was at the second meeting that the UR nominated General Boldyrev, Chaikovskii, Avksent'ev, Argunov as well as the Kadets Astrov and Kishkin as candidates.<sup>125</sup> Miakotin later recalled that the UR subsequently put forward Boldyrev, Avksent'ev, Chaikovskii and Astrov as its candidates.<sup>126</sup> This reduction of six candidates to four suggests that the agreement that the Directory should comprise three members was made in early June. The issue of candidates themselves is also of the utmost importance. The UR, led by Avksent'ev, had not responded well to the idea of including a general in the Directory, which had originated with Shchepkin.<sup>127</sup> In nominating Boldyrev, the UR was clearly suggesting him as an alternative for Alekseev. Of course, the political views of the two generals were far from harmonious, and such a suggestion leads to the possible conclusion that the UR was attempting to pack the Directory with its own members. It is not clear whom the UR would have accepted as an alternative Kadet candidate. For their part, the Kadets nominated Astrov, Miliukov, Nabokov and Kishkin and attempted to reject Avksent'ev.<sup>128</sup> This was bound to lead to discord. Avksent'ev was the dominating

<sup>120</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz vospominanii', in Titov (ed.) *Nikolai Vasil'evich Chaikovskii*, p. 258.

<sup>121</sup> This matter was discussed at a UR meeting at which Astrov and Shchepkin were present. See Rosenberg, pp.288–289.

<sup>122</sup> Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 128.

<sup>123</sup> Shchepkin, 'Istoricheskaia spravka', p. 197; Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 193.

<sup>124</sup> Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, p.299.

<sup>125</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', p. 125.

<sup>126</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago', p. 194.

<sup>127</sup> Ignat'ev 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', p. 105.

<sup>128</sup> Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 129.



figure in the UR, and had no doubt envisaged an important role for himself in Russia's future. There are two possible reasons for the Kadet's distaste for the UR leader. Firstly, as already stated, perhaps he was considered to be one SR candidate too far. The Kadets would surely have preferred the more moderate and acquiescent Chaikovskii. However, perhaps a more plausible explanation (and one that points to the conclusion that there was never any real possibility for unity between the UR and the National Centre in 1918) is Avksent'ev's role in 1917 as an arch-Kerenskyite. Any public association between the UR and Kerensky was widely and wisely avoided, although Avksent'ev was so strongly connected to him (as Minister of Interior in his government, Chairman of the Council of the Republic and generally as a member of his inner circle) that it must have been difficult for those on the right to see him as anything other than a surrogate Kerensky – the very last thing the Kadets wanted. The rejection of Avksent'ev is not mentioned in any SR or Popular Socialist memoir of the period but cannot be ignored. Perhaps it was not seen as significant by the moderate left. However, it would seem quite clear that Avksent'ev's baggage made him a far from suitable candidate if the Volunteer Army were to participate in the Directory.

The other main UR concession, which undoubtedly alleviated the fears of the Kadets, was the repudiation of the 1917 Constituent Assembly. This did, of course, mark a significant break with the PSR, which was organising its own opposition to Soviet power precisely in the name of the Assembly. However, it is doubtful whether the UR's members, even those who came from the PSR, saw the Constituent Assembly of 1917 as a credible body capable of carrying supreme authority in Russia. According to Miakotin, the UR saw the Constituent Assembly just as Savinkov's organisation did: as being elected under abnormal conditions, under the auspices of the Bolsheviks and the Left-SRs, and as incapable of 'State Business'.<sup>129</sup> Argunov, a leading SR member of the organisation, later recalled that the prevailing attitude to the Constituent Assembly was that it had been elected prior to a deep change in the political situation, so that it could no longer be considered to be 'the mouthpiece of the people's opinion', and that if the Constituent Assembly ever reconvened, it should give sanction to any power existing at that time to conduct the war and should

<sup>129</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 182.



concentrate on creating a law to allow elections to a new assembly.<sup>130</sup> The UR was, it would appear, rather cunning in the talks with the National Centre, and fooled the Kadets into thinking they had extracted an important concession, when in fact the UR members themselves had no faith in the Constituent Assembly.

The agreement between the two bodies was announced in a publicly circulated 'Letter from Moscow political figures', reprinted in the Omsk newspaper *Zaria* on 18 August. The letter announced that the two organisations had established a general political platform. Echoing the initial programme of the UR, the letter announced the intention to recreate Russian state power, reunite Russia with the territory torn away from her, and defend her from exterior enemies. This would be achieved in close agreement with the Allies and with the two Russian organisations existing in parallel, not merging into one. The Kadet Party, according to the letter, acted as a bridge between the two, with Kadet representatives entering both groups. A future post-Bolshevik government would be a three-man Directory, one member of which would be the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the others representing the socialist and non-socialist tendencies in the country. The letter also expressed dissatisfaction with Komuch and called for the continuation of the war with Germany with the help of the Allies.<sup>131</sup> The agreement between the two organisations was, then, a compromise built on mutual mistrust and suspicion. The lack of common ground between the two organisations was reflected in the programme, as set out in the above-mentioned letter. There is no mention of policy whatsoever. The UR and the National Centre focussed on the question of power alone, and avoided important matters such as the future of land relations and national minorities questions. Whether either of the organisations had any faith in the future Directory is open to question – would it be at all possible for the moderate left and the moderate right to work together in government and carry out a political programme that would rally the masses to the anti-Bolshevik cause? The future all-Russian government was to be set up in Siberia, where regionalist politics were coming to the fore, and it is clear that the Directory would find it necessary to have the goodwill of other minorities, such as the Bashkirs. It would not suffice to leave all such issues to a future Constituent Assembly – they required at least a temporary solution, while the anti-Bolshevik

<sup>130</sup> Argunov, *Mezhdue dvumia bol'shevizmami*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>131</sup> Hoover Institution, Ostroukhov Collection, 'Pis'mo moskovskikh politicheskikh deiatel'ei, Moskva 24 iulia–6 Avgusta 1918g.'

campaign was being conducted at the front. The issues which had proved to be stumbling blocks for the Kerensky government were skirted around, for fear of a rupture in the negotiations. The agreement between the two groups, then, was very much of its time, born out of the need for Allied assistance and the desire to proceed with the organisation of serious military activity.

Contact with the Union for the Salvation of the Fatherland and Freedom was of a less official character. Savinkov claimed in later accounts of 1918 that he was invited to join the UR (or 'Left Centre') on numerous occasions. It is very doubtful, however, that this was a straightforward invitation. Savinkov recalled meetings with Moiseenko which examined the possibility of concerted action, and claimed that he held meetings with various SRs about his joining the UR.<sup>132</sup> Zenzinov's own recollections, however, make it clear that these talks were far from cordial and were conducted in defiance of advice received from the PSR Central Committee. Relations with Savinkov were so cold that they were soon broken off, and it would appear to be most likely that the suggestion of his joining the UR was made for the same reason as the negotiations with the National Centre – to prevent premature action and perhaps to attempt to control his maverick tendencies, as is suggested by Ignat'ev's recollections of the negotiations which he links with the desire of the UR to prevent Savinkov making an individual deal with the Allies.<sup>133</sup> Savinkov also met Mel'gunov and Titov several times in his flat, but no agreement was made, as Savinkov was unimpressed by the democratic nature of the UR.<sup>134</sup>

Savinkov was, however, able to enter into some kind of working relationship with the National Centre, and he can be considered to have been an affiliate of the organisation in May to June 1918. This may have been due to the fact that his own organisation was decimated in May by a series of arrests which marked the downfall of the organisation, according to Perkhurov.<sup>135</sup> However, Savinkov looked upon both the National Centre and the UR 'with a certain disdainfulness'.<sup>136</sup> This did not, of course, prevent Savinkov from attempting to extract funds from the National Centre

<sup>132</sup> GARF, f. 5831 (Savinkov), op. 1, d. 578; Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, trial testimony, p. 15.

<sup>133</sup> Zenzinov, 'Bor'ba', pp. 20–21; Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia', pp. 102–103.

<sup>134</sup> Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p. 50.

<sup>135</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', p. 55.

<sup>136</sup> Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, trial testimony, p. 13.



and to get approval for a series of uprisings on the Volga, although all three organisations clearly received individual funding from Allied sources.<sup>137</sup>

It was after these negotiations that the nature of the political underground in Petrograd began to become more like that in Moscow. Previously, the underground had been rather a mish-mash of officer organisations with a little populist leadership.<sup>138</sup> However, in June, upon Ignat'ev's return to the former capital, he began to meet with a number of other political figures. These included the aforementioned Abraham Gots, as well as L. M. Bramson (Popular Socialist), V. D. Pepeliaev (Kadet) and the Mensheviks Potresov and Rozanov.<sup>139</sup> Pepeliaev, a future conspirator in the Omsk coup of 18 November which brought Admiral Kolchak into power, was participating in covert anti-Bolshevik activity for the first time. It is for this reason that he is often considered to have been a member of the UR or the National Centre. However, the talks between Pepeliaev and the UR in Petrograd, which could again have created a genuine inter-party organisation spanning the moderate political spectrum, were short-lived and Pepeliaev soon formed his own officer organisation.<sup>140</sup> At this time, in June of 1918, the UR was extending its activity into the North Russian region. As the UR existed at the same time as a number of officer organisations, it is not clear what talks took place in on its behalf in Vologda, but it is apparent that Ignat'ev met with several people involved in his capacity as the leader of the UR in Petrograd. One of these organisations with which Ignat'ev held talks was led by General Suvorov and was involved in a plan to transfer Russian troops to Murmansk in order to work with the occupying British forces under General F. C. Poole, who had recently arrived in North Russia as the head of British military operations in the region. Ignat'ev considered working together with this group to set up a section of the UR in Murmansk, but eventually gave up on the idea after extracting from the organisation some fifteen thousand rubles.<sup>141</sup> Another scheme to send troops to General Poole was planned by the Russian military doctor Kovalevskii.<sup>142</sup> This is

<sup>137</sup> Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p. 51; Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, pp. 46–48; Zenzinov, 'Bor'ba', p. 24; Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, pp. 247–249, Argunov, *Mezhdv dvumia bol'shevizmami*, p. 7. These sources all provide examples of the links between one or more of the groups and the Allies, which are confirmed by Savinkov's trial testimony. Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, trial testimony, p. 17.

<sup>138</sup> See above, pp. 50–53.

<sup>139</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', p. 105.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 106–108.

<sup>141</sup> *loc.cit.*

<sup>142</sup> *loc.cit.*

probably the same plan as that worked on by Captain G. E. Chaplin, who had been working in Petrograd with the British naval attaché Captain Cromie. Chaplin also made connections with General Poole and a 'military doctor' in Vologda.<sup>143</sup> It would appear, then, that Ignat'ev and Chaplin were both connected with attempts to link Russian and British forces in North Russia. What this conspiratorial activity demonstrates, although little came from it directly, is that the Allied landing in Arkhangel'sk, which resulted in the setting up of the anti-Bolshevik government led by Chaikovskii, was the culmination of two months of negotiations involving the UR, the plethora of officer organisations in existence in Petrograd, and British military representatives in North Russia.

### *Allied Influence and Military Planning*

The three component groups of the anti-Bolshevik underground may not have been in full agreement on any single political issue, but they shared one fundamental aim. That aim was to extract as much Allied help as possible and ensure the continuation of the war against Germany and to establish an eastern front that would advance on Moscow and crush Soviet power. The military plans of each group were not the result of any mutual arrangement, but were certainly co-ordinated. General Boldyrev discussed a military plan with the French military mission and worked out a general Russian and Allied Volga-Urals-Northern front.<sup>144</sup> This military plan was clearly dependent on Allied intervention via Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk. Noulens apparently promised Savinkov that the landing would be significant and that Allied forces would take care of matters as far south as Vologda, and persuaded Savinkov to seize Iaroslavl and the three neighbouring towns Rybinsk, Kostroma and Murom.<sup>145</sup> Savinkov himself, once the notion of an uprising in the capital had been abandoned, had decided to take Kazan, where he had already sent Colonel Rychkov and a

<sup>143</sup> Chaplin, G. E, 'Dva Perevorota na Severe', in Goldin, V. I. (ed.) *Belyi sever 1918-1920gg. Memuary i dokumenty*. Arkhangel'sk: Pravda Severa, 1993 (hereafter 'Dva Perevorota'), pp. 46-48. It is possible that Chaplin's involvement with Cromie concerned the latter's plan to scuttle the Baltic Fleet. See above, p. 63.

<sup>144</sup> Zenzinov, 'Bor'ba', p. 24.

<sup>145</sup> Hoover Institution, Savinkov collection, trial testimony, p. 16.



significant portion of the Union's forces.<sup>146</sup> According to Savinkov, the Allied landings were to occur between 5 July and 10 July 1918, and it was this undertaking alone that persuaded him to agree with the French Ambassador's suggestion.<sup>147</sup> This claim is born out by Zenzinov's recollection that Noulens promised Avksent'ev that Vologda would be occupied by 15 July.<sup>148</sup> From this it is beyond any doubt that all three underground groups expected the Allied landings to allow the reconstruction of an eastern front southwards from Arkhangel'sk to the Volga via Vologda. Just how far south this front extended would depend on the success of various uprisings but the key would be timing. If the landings and uprisings could be timed to coincide, the Red forces would be thinly spread and despite the numerical weakness of the underground's military cells there would be a reasonable chance of some success, which would allow the leaders to appeal to local workers and peasants for support and in this way raise an effective army. For this reason there was optimistic talk of the eventual creation of a front that stretched from the White Sea to the Black Sea.<sup>149</sup>

The conclusion of these agreements came at a time of increasing Cheka repression and the position of better-known individuals became more and more difficult. The Bolsheviks had come under pressure from a series of reversals in city Soviet elections in May. In many towns around Moscow, along the Upper Volga and elsewhere, the Mensheviks and SRs had reasserted themselves. However, the response of the Bolsheviks, to shut down soviets with Menshevik-SR majorities revealed two important points. Firstly, the underground could expect to find local support in significant numbers. Secondly, the path of legal opposition was clearly now closed.<sup>150</sup> This new period of political repression was reflected in the fact that many individuals no longer felt safe in the capital. Astrof, for example, had taken to walking around Moscow in a peaked cap in order to hide his face.<sup>151</sup>

By June, then, the time had quite clearly come to leave Moscow and begin to implement the plans that had recently been agreed upon. Here the importance of

<sup>146</sup> Gopper, K. I. 'Iz vospominanii General-Maiora K. I. Goppera o Iaroslavskom vosstanii 1918 goda', in *Iaroslavskoe vosstanie. Iiul' 1918*. Moscow: 'Posev', 1998 (hereafter 'Iz vospominanii Goppera'), p. 80.

<sup>147</sup> Hoover Institution, Savinkov collection, trial testimony, p. 18.

<sup>148</sup> Zenzinov, 'Bor'ba', p. 24.

<sup>149</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 193.

<sup>150</sup> On the success of the Mensheviks and SRs in many towns of the North, the Upper and Lower Volga, the Central Industrial Region and the Black Earth Region in the spring and the closure of non-Bolshevik soviets, see Brovkin, V. *The Mensheviks After October*, pp. 126–160.

<sup>151</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago I', p. 178.



Allied influence on the plans of the underground cannot be over-emphasised. The negotiations between the underground groups and with the Allied representatives occurred at a time when political life in Moscow was becoming dangerous. The plans that were made may have been hasty – as Mel'gunov later put it, perhaps a concerted effort at a single insurrection in the centre would have been a better idea, considering the problems the Bolsheviks were facing at the time.<sup>152</sup> However, the promise of significant and speedy Allied intervention was enough to convince Avksent'ev, Savinkov, Astrov and their colleagues, who, in their difficult position were perhaps over-keen to accept Allied help and may have interpreted what was clearly for Noulens a loose arrangement as being an official undertaking. However, Mel'gunov's criticism of the Allies, to the effect that they were involved in 'behind the scenes intrigue' and were guilty of provocation, contains some truth.<sup>153</sup> Had the underground known of the discussions between Allied representatives and the Bolsheviks, which had continued while they were making arrangements with Boldyrev and Savinkov, the underground might not have held the ambassador's promises in such blind faith.<sup>154</sup> The underground can of course also be criticised for extreme naïveté. The meetings held with representatives such as Lockhart and Noulens were considered to be official and binding, a belief that in retrospect smacks of almost desperate optimism. The promises made by Noulens were never backed up by the Quai d'Orsay, yet there are no accounts of the underground groups ever questioning the reliability of the Allied undertaking to intervene. However, the negotiations caused most of the underground's leaders to leave the capital.

### *Exodus*

It is not clear just how Russia had been divided into spheres of influence but much can be surmised. Iaroslavl and the towns near to it had been suggested to Savinkov by Noulens, as stated above. This of course could have come about as the result of meetings with General Boldyrev. Being less of a military organisation, the Moscow UR sent many of its senior members, who were candidates for the Directory, to the

<sup>152</sup> Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 61.

<sup>153</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka* Vol. I, p. 48.

<sup>154</sup> Bruce Lockhart had continued to meet with Trotsky until 15 May. The Foreign Office did not hear of Trotsky's rupturing of these relations until 25 May. PRO FO 371/3286/92955.



Volga–Urals region, an area to the rear of the planned new eastern front. As regards the National Centre, the organisation's preoccupation with Ukraine and its friendly relations with Alekseev made the South a natural destination. They had by this time agreed with Savinkov's plans and given sanction to the Iaroslavl uprising.<sup>155</sup> As Astrov and Fedorov left Moscow for the Don, Savinkov on 10 June sent Perkhurov to develop the Union's connections in Iaroslavl, later himself moving to the nearby town of Rybinsk to organise the rising there and to coordinate with Perkhurov.<sup>156</sup> The members of the UR headed east, as did many other SRs at this time, as a result of the revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion. Most made for Samara, which became the capital of the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly, which (unlike the UR) intended to continue their struggle in the name of the body elected in 1917 and was far closer to Chernov than to Argunov or to Avkent'ev (who was sent to Siberia in order to establish relations with the Siberian regionalist movement).<sup>157</sup> The UR was also to be associated with the anti-Bolshevik movement in the North. Chaikovskii had been one of the first UR members to leave Moscow, heading for Vologda in early June. There he intended to meet up with old acquaintances in the local co-operative movement and other public organisations to inform them of the plans of the UR, and then to proceed to Siberia.<sup>158</sup> However, Chaikovskii never made the journey across the Urals, and instead became the major political figure in the anti-Bolshevik government of the Northern Oblast.<sup>159</sup>

The exit of many of the leading figures of the anti-Bolshevik underground made life very different for those who remained. What was their role to be? The remaining members of the UR continued to meet, as did the National Centre. However, the fact that it had been decided to conduct practical work elsewhere left Moscow 'politically dead', as Shchepkin later put it.<sup>160</sup> The UR was forced to alter the venue of its meetings regularly, but in reality there was little to discuss. From Kotliarevskii's account, it is clear that the National Centre in Moscow was almost completely cut off from events outside the city.<sup>161</sup> As the Bolsheviks' control over the Russian heartland was never seriously threatened, the centre could never perform any

<sup>155</sup> Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, trial testimony, p. 23.

<sup>156</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', p. 56.

<sup>157</sup> Gusev, *Partiia Eserov*, p. 229.

<sup>158</sup> Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 70.

<sup>159</sup> See below, pp. 88–99.

<sup>160</sup> Shchepkin, 'Istoricheskaia spravka N. N. Shchepkina', p. 198.

kind of co-ordinating function between the North, the East and the South. Once the members of the UR, the National Centre and the Union for the Salvation of the Fatherland and Freedom reached their appointed destinations, they acted separately and therefore must be considered separately.

### *Iaroslavl*

The Iaroslavl uprising and the attempted uprisings in the nearby towns of Rybinsk and Murom were the first to come about as a result of the agreements made between the anti-Bolshevik underground and the Allies, and the only part of the 'democratic counter-revolution' not to be inexorably linked with Allied intervention. Of course, it is possible to link Savinkov's Union (and therefore the uprising that was conducted in its name and in the name of the Northern Volunteer Army) with the Allied assistance rendered during the spring. However, that would grossly exaggerate the positive role played by the Allies in this episode of the civil war. Allied involvement in Russian affairs at this moment had an entirely negative effect on the 'democratic counter-revolution', as shown quite clearly by the consequence of Noulens's promises and the behaviour of the British forces in North Russia, led by General Poole. The Iaroslavl uprising has suffered historiographically due to its association with the Allies and due to the fact that Savinkov made use of officer organisations in recruiting members of his Union. However, as Savinkov himself made clear, the rising at Iaroslavl made use of 'exclusively Russian forces'.<sup>162</sup> Also, given the origins of the uprising as part of a broad anti-Bolshevik movement with a definite, if very general, political programme, it is not strictly correct to characterise Iaroslavl as a 'White Guard' insurrection, which is how Soviet historians tended to portray it.<sup>163</sup> When asked at his trial whether Perkhurov and Rychkov were monarchists, Savinkov replied 'They stood for the Constituent Assembly'.<sup>164</sup> Savinkov may have been close to General Alekseev, but it

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<sup>161</sup> Mel'gunov (ed.), 'Iz pokazanii Kotliarevskago', pp. 139–140.

<sup>162</sup> GARF, f. 5831 (Savinkov), op. 1, d. 578.

<sup>163</sup> An important example of this is Spirin, A.M. *Klassy i partii v grazhdanskoi voine v Rossii (1917–1920gg.)* Moscow: Mysl



seems likely that, had the Iaroslavl uprising been a success, and had Savinkov held on long enough to rally local people in anticipation of further reinforcements, a link-up with Arkhangel'sk would have been possible and the plans made in the spring might have come to fruition, at least in part. It is therefore appropriate to examine the events of the uprising and the reasons for its failure.

As noted above, the plans for the Iaroslavl uprising began in June, when Perkhurov arrived in the town to investigate the potential of the local area for anti-Bolshevik activity. Perkhurov and the leader of the local organisation, Colonel K. M. Lebedev, were unable initially to gather the agreed three hundred men, and Perkhurov returned to Moscow. However, Savinkov sent him back to Iaroslavl to speed up Lebedev's work, and on his return he managed to recruit around two hundred into the organisation.<sup>165</sup> Savinkov then ordered Perkhurov to make full preparations for an uprising on 4 to 5 July.<sup>166</sup> The success of the Iaroslavl uprising was to be inextricably linked with risings in the nearby towns – in particular Rybinsk, where a large artillery store was located and which Savinkov considered to be the 'pivotal point'.<sup>167</sup> For this reason, Savinkov made for Rybinsk, along with Colonel Brode, and was thus not present at the events in Iaroslavl which are so bound up with his name.<sup>168</sup> Colonel Gopper was placed in charge of Kostroma, and Dr Grigor'ev was sent to Murom. It was clear to Gopper that his organisation in Kostroma was weak, and in early July he decided to transfer his men to Iaroslavl.<sup>169</sup> The situation in Rybinsk and Iaroslavl was considered to be far more propitious. The Red forces in Rybinsk were believed to be no match for the officer organisation there and success was, the Union thought, guaranteed. Artillery from the military stores could then be sent to help Perkhurov in Iaroslavl, where local workers, in particular the railwaymen, were known to be greatly dissatisfied with the Bolsheviks.<sup>170</sup>

This did not prevent Perkhurov from panicking. Arriving in Iaroslavl for the second time only ten days before the date set by Savinkov for the risings, he had few forces with which to work. The civil administration of the town had already been determined before Perkhurov's arrival. Iaroslavl was a Menshevik stronghold. The

<sup>165</sup> Perkhurov, 'Iz pokazanii general-maiora A. P. Perkhurova sudu revtribunala v 1922g. v Iaroslavle', *Iaroslavskoe vosstanie. Iiul' 1918*. Moscow: Posev, 1998, p. 102.

<sup>166</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', p. 58.

<sup>167</sup> Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, trial testimony, p. 22.

<sup>168</sup> *loc.cit.*

<sup>169</sup> Gopper, 'Iz vospominanii Goppera', p. 84.

town Duma had been dominated by the party and was led by I. T. Savinov, who was chosen to be Perkhurov's assistant commander in charge of civil affairs. Relations between the two were cordial – according to Perkhurov they never shared a crossed word.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, the local population had good reason to be angry with the Bolsheviks. At the elections to the Iaroslavl Soviet in March, the Mensheviks had received a massive eighty seven per cent of the vote. This election was one of the many declared to be unlawful by the Bolsheviks that spring and the Soviet was dispersed.<sup>172</sup> For this reason, Iaroslavl was an excellent choice of venue for an uprising, as chances of winning the support of the local people were reasonably high. However, there was little doubt that the two hundred men raised thus far would be woefully insufficient. The local garrison numbered around one thousand men. On the first or second of July a representative of the garrison visited Perkhurov, introducing himself as 'comrade Vladimir'. Evidently the Union's plans were far from secret. 'Comrade Vladimir' assured Perkhurov that his men were sympathetic to the Union's plans, but were afraid of their 'international company'. This meant, he said, that the garrison could not join in the uprising (which would have almost certainly guaranteed its success) but he promised that it would remain neutral. Perkhurov, of course, was loath to rely on such promises and was understandably concerned about the numerical weakness of the forces at his disposal.<sup>173</sup> This makes a mockery of Soviet attempts to exaggerate the numbers involved, with one source claiming that the underground forces in Iaroslavl numbered one thousand by early July.<sup>174</sup> The battle around the old town would involve small numbers and in many ways revealed the passivity of the local people. Neither the Bolsheviks nor their opponents commanded large armies at this point in the civil war, and therefore any reinforcements that might join Perkhurov from other towns or from the surrounding villages was significant.

In the opinion of Colonel Gopper, the Union should allow the workers in Iaroslavl to take the initiative, acting to support them and heading the military forces.

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<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

<sup>171</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', p. 58.

<sup>172</sup> Bogdanov-Khoroshev, P.A. 'Iz pokazanii chlena RSDRP (Men'shevikov) P.A. Bogdanov-Khorosheva sudu revtribunala 16 Avgusta 1923g.', *Iaroslavskoe vosstanie. Iiul' 1918*. Moscow: Posev, 1998 (hereafter 'Iz pokazanii Bogdanov-Khorosheva'), p. 105.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

<sup>174</sup> Spirin, *Klassy i partii*, p. 207. An earlier Soviet account also exaggerates the numbers involved, claiming that the forces in Iaroslavl, Rybinsk and Kostroma each numbered three to four hundred. Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 252.



He considered that 'If it was the other way around, then the result would be the same as in Tambov and Penza, that is, the massacre of officers and intelligentsia, abandoned at the critical moment by the masses.' Savinkov agreed with this, but said that too many workers were too close to the Bolsheviks and that it would be impossible to organise a popular workers' uprising. On a trip to Iaroslavl before the uprising, Savinkov held lengthy negotiations with local workers who gave their word that within one and a half hours of the beginning of the uprising, the Union would have 150 railwaymen at their disposal, and another three hundred after four hours. On the next day, it was expected that factory workers would either join in or at least remain neutral.<sup>175</sup>

The plan of the uprising was as follows: the troops were to gather just outside of the old town, by the small military stores, at around one o'clock in the morning on 5 July. The town would only just be dark, due to the shortness of the nights at that time of year. There, the guard would be forced to surrender and open the stores without a shot being fired. The newly armed soldiers would surround the barracks and take the post and telegraphic station. Workers, at the first sound of shots being fired, would make for the military stores, arm themselves and seize control of the railway station. The Soviet troops in the town's officer training school would then hopefully give up their arms, as the garrison's armoured division under Lieutenant Suponin was due to join up with Perkhurov's forces at the rendezvous point. Other main buildings in the town centre would be placed under guard and the troops would congregate there. As day broke, the town would be under the control of Perkhurov's forces. Savinkov promised Perkhurov that help would come from Rybinsk almost immediately and that within four days Allied forces would be on their way from Arkhangel'sk.<sup>176</sup> Savinkov had also ordered officers associated with the Union to go to Iaroslavl. In all, around two hundred were expected, but by 4 July, the eve of the rising, no more than fifty had arrived.<sup>177</sup> The old town centre would not, strategically speaking, be particularly difficult to defend. Iaroslavl sits at the meeting of the Volga with the smaller Kotorosl river, and in order to defend it, the troops would only have

<sup>175</sup> Gopper, 'Iz vospominanii Goppera', p. 84.

<sup>176</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', p. 59.

<sup>177</sup> Tsvetkov, V. Zh. 'Vosstanie na Iaroslavskoi zemle', *Iaroslavskoe vosstanie. Iiul' 1918*. Moscow: Posev, 1998 (hereafter 'Vosstanie na Iaroslavskoi zemle'), p. 6, gives this number, together with a paltry twelve from Kostroma. These figures are presumably taken from Gopper's memoirs – Gopper, 'Iz vospominanii Goppera', p. 84.

to hold a line from the banks of the Kotorosl around the edge of the old town to the bridge over the Volga. The arrival of artillery from Rybinsk would prevent Soviet forces from taking the bridge.

On 4 July at 5.00 p.m. at a local Menshevik Party Committee meeting, Savinov informed his comrades of the Union's plans for an uprising and of his participation in meetings with the men who were to lead the armed forces in the town. The local party may have had sympathies with such a revolt, but obeyed the directive of their Central Committee in deciding to remain neutral and maintain its 'freedom of action'.<sup>178</sup> This was undoubtedly a major blow for Savinkov and the leaders of the uprising. Had the Mensheviks given their sanction, the support of the local workers would have been far more dependable.

The plans of the Union suffered further upsets throughout the night. When Perkhurov arrived at the assembly point at 2.00 a.m. Suponin's armoured division had not arrived as planned; and instead of three hundred men, a paltry seventy had turned up. When what appeared to be a signalling flare went into the air nearby, the troops feared that they had been entrapped by Suponin, who, in his absence was judged to be an *agent provocateur*. In fact, the poor showing of troops was due to bad communication and the failure of Suponin to arrive seems to have been due to a loss of nerve – the signalling flare turned out to be nothing more than an ill-timed domestic firework.<sup>179</sup> Suponin's behaviour, though, had been rather more suspicious. He had spent the day spreading rumours of the arrival of Red troops at the railway station, which he said outnumbered the Union's forces by two to one, and had seriously undermined the confidence of Gopper and the forces at his disposal. Gopper at 8.00 p.m. had decided to abort, but could not reach Perkhurov at such a late stage. It is for this reason that only sixty to seventy men proceeded to the rendezvous point that evening.<sup>180</sup> Those men decided that it would be impossible to overcome the Bolshevik forces at the stores and that the best course of action was to postpone the rising until the following night, which gave Perkhurov twenty-four hours to correct the day's gaffes.<sup>181</sup> What is clear from this aborted attempt at raising the rebellion is that the military men involved were most nervous about the chances of success. The

<sup>178</sup> Bogdanov-Khoroshev, 'Iz pokazanii Bogdanova-Khorosheva', p. 106.

<sup>179</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', p. 62.

<sup>180</sup> Gopper, 'Iz vospominanii Goppera', p. 85.

<sup>181</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', p. 60.



forces at hand were minuscule, and a great deal depended on the attitude of the garrison, the swift arrival of artillery and reinforcements from Rybinsk, and the promised Allied troops. If the local people were to be rallied to the cause, some initial success was essential.

During the following day, Perkhurov attempted to find out exactly what had gone wrong. Suponin, with whom Perkhurov was less than pleased, continued to alarm the prepared troops by claiming that the Bolsheviks knew all about the planned uprising and had placed a machine-gun on the roof of a church tower in the centre of town. Nearby prisoners of war had also, apparently, been armed. The Union was walking into a trap. Both these rumours turned out to be completely false, and Perkhurov was forced to order Suponin to desist in spreading alarmist information.<sup>182</sup> This behaviour does present the possibility that Suponin was attempting to sabotage the uprising. On the previous day, he had visited the headquarters of the Union's armed forces and told the men that the Soviet forces had discussed arresting the command. Five names, he said, had been mentioned, including Perkhurov and Gopper but not Savinkov.<sup>183</sup> There is not even the slightest implication in Savinkov's trial testimony that the leader of the Union was anything other than bent on destroying Soviet power, and it is almost impossible to see him as a traitor to the anti-Bolshevik cause. Suponin was, then, spreading falsehoods on both 4 and 5 July, which did a great deal to damage the Union's chances of success. By the evening of the fifth, there can be little doubt that some Red forces were alerted to the danger of an uprising. Gopper, who described the events of that night as the beginning of the 'Iaroslavl nightmare', believes that only the posting of Bolshevik guards at various points throughout the town could have prevented so many men from reaching the rendezvous point of the cemetery by the agreed time of 2.00 a.m.<sup>184</sup>

By 2.00 a.m. Perkhurov had been joined by only 106 men who boasted an arsenal of only twelve revolvers. Having decided to go ahead with the venture, despite being dogged by misfortune and incompetence, Perkhurov's luck began to change. The small military stores were opened without the firing of a single shot, the sentinels having unquestioningly laid down their arms. The men then sat and waited for Suponin to arrive with the promised armoured car – an arrival which had been

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>183</sup> Gopper, 'Iz vospominanii Goppera', p. 85.

<sup>184</sup> Gopper, *loc.cit.*

scheduled for 3.00 a.m. As dawn approached, Suponin had still not arrived and the men decided to go on without the armoured division. However, just as this decision had been made, the division appeared, led not by Suponin but by another officer. Then around thirty mounted Bolshevik troops came to investigate what was going on, and after one had been shot, promptly agreed to join in with Perkhurov's forces. The massed forces then headed for the centre of town, where many important buildings, including the Korsunskii gymnasium (which became Perkhurov's headquarters) were seized with little resistance.<sup>185</sup> A gathering of regimental commissars was also easily arrested.<sup>186</sup>

Thus, as day broke on 6 July, Iaroslavl, against all probability, lay in the hands of the Union. The new regime in Iaroslavl was announced later that day in an appeal to the people and in Perkhurov's 'Order No. 1', the first of a series of quasi-laws passed during the town's fifteen-day-long stand against Soviet power. The entry into the town's civil administration of Savinov and the Kadet A. Kizner was announced, as was the sympathy of the new regime with those anti-Bolshevik authorities already set up in Samara and Omsk. Perkhurov claimed the town in the name of the Volunteer Army of General Alekseev and placed the town under military rule.<sup>187</sup> Further orders issued on 8 July reinstated the town's organs of self-government, established by the Provisional Government in 1917. In general, the Union was conscious of the need to present its actions as specifically anti-Bolshevik and not anti-revolutionary. Indeed, Savinkov was described in the regime's initial appeal as an 'old revolutionary'.<sup>188</sup> The new regime in Iaroslavl was, therefore, attempting to align itself both with the 'democratic counter-revolution' and with the Volunteer Army. This could have had a significant beneficial effect upon the anti-Bolshevik struggle, as the Whites could have been drawn into the orbit of those who desired a return to the more moderate politics of the February Revolution and a broad coalition, rather than the moderate left being swallowed by the Whites. However, these plans soon came under attack. As the

<sup>185</sup> Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', pp. 62–65.

<sup>186</sup> Nefedov, N. 'Iaroslavskoe vosstanie 1918 goda', *Soprotivlenie bol'shevizmu 1917–1918 gg.* Moscow: Tsentropoligraf, 2001, p. 428.

<sup>187</sup> Kozliakov, V. N. (ed.) 'Grazhdane! Teper' vam vsem iasno, kto takie bol'sheviki...(Listovki Iaroslavskogo vosstaniia 1918 goda)', in *Iaroslavskaiia starina. Iz arkhiva russkoi provintsii*. Iaroslavl: Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Iaroslavskoi Oblasti, 1992 (hereafter 'Listovki Iaroslavskogo vosstaniia'), pp. 43–44.

<sup>188</sup> Kozliakov, *loc.cit.*



Union was working out the new administration of the town on July 6th, the situation in Iaroslavl was far from stable.

In order to maintain a firm grip on the town centre, the neutrality (or preferably participation) of the local garrison was vital. At 1.00 p.m. a representative of the 1st Soviet Regiment arrived at Perkhurov's headquarters with the message that his men would remain neutral if Perkhurov made no attempt to disarm them. The general considered that he did not possess the manpower to disarm the garrison but his demand that the troops disarm themselves did little to impress, as the regiment was adamant that it would not lay down its weapons until it was satisfied of the aims of the rebellion.<sup>189</sup> The failure of the negotiations between Perkhurov and the regiment precipitated an early start to the Red counter-attack. A short while after the meeting, a formation of Soviet troops approached the military store, shouting 'Do not shoot, we are with you'. The troops, having been allowed to approach, then attacked the store with bayonets, killing all but two of the guard left there by Perkhurov, who managed to escape and inform their leader of the attack. The Soviet troops had successfully duped Perkhurov, whose political naïveté and inexperience must be blamed for the collapse in relations with the regiment – relations which, had they been competently managed, could have led to a strengthening of the uprising. The line of battle was rapidly drawn between the military store and Tugovii Hill, which effectively surrounded the old town as far as the Volga, as the part of the town between the railway station and the Kotorosl was in the hands of the Reds.<sup>190</sup> From that moment on, Iaroslavl was under siege, awaiting promised reinforcements and attempting to mobilise the local population to aid the cause of the uprising.

The fate of the Iaroslavl uprising was, therefore, in the hands of the Union in Rybinsk and Murom (where separate risings were planned to coincide with that of Perkhurov) and in the hands of the Allies, who had, of course, promised to send reinforcements of their own via Arkhangel'sk. However, reinforcements did not come. That Savinkov's plans would fail was decided in the early hours of 8 July. Savinkov personally led the rising in Rybinsk, on which Iaroslavl depended, along with Dikgof-Derental and Brede. However, the battle, which the Union had expected to be a formality, was lost by 2.00 a.m. A simultaneous rising in Murom suffered a

<sup>189</sup> Gopper, 'Iz vospominanii Goppera', p. 86.

<sup>190</sup> *ibid.*, p.65.

similar fate, with the Union's troops being driven out of the town early on 10 July. Savinkov decided shortly after his failure in Rybinsk that 'in my opinion it would be senseless to start anything in Iaroslavl'. But his warning to Perkhurov, of course, came too late.<sup>191</sup> Despite the fact that the Iaroslavl uprising was delayed by twenty-four hours, it had begun well before the other two, and the failure in Rybinsk and Murom left Perkhurov's forces isolated and surrounded, desperately holding on in the hope of an Allied landing.

The mood of the Union during the first few days of the uprising was, nevertheless, optimistic. In the opinion of the leaders of the uprising, there were a number of reasons to believe that their position would soon be reinforced. The local population appeared to be in favour of their actions, and it was hoped that local villagers could be mobilised for the defence of the town. There was also the hope that seven to eight hundred workers could be counted on to strengthen the forces at the Union's disposal. As well as expecting help from Rybinsk, the Union had assessed the strategic situation of the town and decided that it would be difficult for the Red Army to divert significant forces towards Iaroslavl. Rybinsk lay on the road between the town and Petrograd and the route to Moscow had been put out of use by railway workers sympathetic to the uprising.

The first three days of the short-lived Perkhurov regime were the most positive. The possibility of mobilising the local population meant that absence of news from Rybinsk, Murom, Kostroma or Rostov did not seem too ominous. A delegation from the local village of Iakovlevsk arrived on the evening of 8 July. The village, only three to four versts away from Iaroslavl across the Volga, had amassed a force of around eight hundred men and wanted arms in order to take the anti-Bolshevik struggle to the countryside. Two to three hundred men from Tolgobol volost had also gathered in Iakovlevsk.<sup>192</sup> There is reason, then, to suppose that had the Union been in possession of more supplies (and, in particular, weapons), the local population could have posed a serious threat for the minimal Red forces surrounding the town. A conflict that spilled beyond the limits of the old town was beyond the capabilities of the Red Army at that time, concentrated as it was on fighting the Czechoslovak Legion and unable to easily divert troops to the Iaroslavl region.

<sup>191</sup> Hoover Institution, Savinkov Collection, trial testimony, p. 22; Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, pp. 262–264.

<sup>192</sup> Gopper, 'Iz vospominanii Goppera', p. 87.



However, the Union was unable to supply a village uprising alone and it was clear that it could only afford to distribute arms to defend the town. Sixty to seventy villagers did enter the ranks defending the town, but the inability of the Union to take full advantage of the disaffected local population has to be seen as a huge missed opportunity.<sup>193</sup> Therefore, recent Russian historiographical attempts to reclassify the Iaroslavl as a popular uprising supported by the local population, rather than a specifically White attack on the Soviet regime, have some basis in reality but perhaps overstate the case.<sup>194</sup> There can be no doubt that the acquiescence of the local population made it easy for Perkhurov to take the town with little use of force, but that was not enough. A popular uprising requires active mass participation. The real failure of the Union in Iaroslavl was that it had not planned the uprising sufficiently in order to ensure that the workers and peasants of the region could be armed and brought into a broader based and geographically more widespread partisan struggle. Gopper himself wrote of the difficulties in mobilising the population of the town, which was so crucial once Iaroslavl had been surrounded and the Bolshevik forces were attacking the town from the railway bridge spanning the Volga.<sup>195</sup> Much of this must be seen to have been a consequence of the decision of the local Menshevik committee to remain neutral. Had that party rallied the urban population behind the Union, the seven to eight hundred workers counted on by Perkhurov might have materialised.

While Perkhurov was unsuccessfully attempting to mobilise the town and the surrounding villages, the Red forces were gradually being reinforced with heavy artillery and troops from Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Vologda and Vladimir. What Perkhurov later described as the 'iron ring' surrounding the town became stronger and more difficult to transgress.<sup>196</sup> By 10 to 11 July it was clear that reinforcements would not come from the nearby towns, and that the only hope lay in the arrival of Allied troops. The next few days saw a marked change in the mood of the leadership as they realised that they were fighting a losing battle. The orders and appeals of the temporary regime began to be more and more fatalistic in tone, talking of the town's

<sup>193</sup> Gopper, *loc.cit.*

<sup>194</sup> Tsvetkov, 'Vosstanie na Iaroslavskoi zemle', pp. 5–11; Kolodich, B.N. 'Iiu'skoe 1918 goda antibol'shevistskoe vosstanie v Iaroslavle: politicheskoe-istoricheskoe osmyslenie', *Iaroslavskoe vosstanie. Iiul' 1918*. Moscow: Posev, 1998, pp. 19–21.

<sup>195</sup> Gopper, 'Iz vospominanii Goppera', p. 88.

<sup>196</sup> Spirin, *Klassy i Partii*, p. 208; Perkhurov, 'Vospominaniia Perkhurova', p. 65.

‘heroic struggle’ and of the belief that ‘God will save our Fatherland’.<sup>197</sup> As Iaroslavl came under relentless and merciless artillery fire (which frequently set the historic town ablaze and caused irreparable damage to many of its old buildings), Perkhurov, Gopper and the other military leaders made repeated efforts to plug holes in the front, which had been divided into six sections, each consisting of around 100 men.<sup>198</sup> Such small forces inevitably began to capitulate to the onslaught of the Reds, who by this stage massively outnumbered them. Perkhurov decided to flee the town by river, and departed by steamer on 17 July with fifty men.<sup>199</sup> Although the town kept fighting under the leadership of General Karpov, the uprising was effectively over, finally giving way to the Soviet forces on 21 July.

It is difficult to state with any real certainty that the Iaroslavl uprising ever had the ability to establish a reasonably stable centre around which a new anti-Bolshevik front could have been formed. On its own, there was no hope for a long battle against Soviet forces which were already proving their ability to move around the vast territory susceptible to attack and focus on specific threats when they arose. Savinkov’s underestimation of the strength of the Bolsheviks in Rybinsk, the inability to turn genuine local sympathy into committed armed rebellion and the crucial absence of Allied support had left the Iaroslavl uprising doomed. Ultimately, the failure of Savinkov’s Union must rest with the plans of its leader. While it does appear to be the case that the failure of the Allies to deliver their promise of a significant intervention, which also had a bearing on events to the north of Iaroslavl, had much to do with the inability of Perkhurov’s troops to hold on, it is equally clear that, had the uprising been more carefully planned and co-ordinated, there was some chance of making a great deal more of it. Savinkov himself must be judged to have been guilty of over-reliance on the expected foreign intervention, which caused the plans to be rushed and the rising to be premature. There is no reason to believe that a compromise between the Union and the local Mensheviks could not have been reached – after all, their leader, Suponin, was a key member of the temporary administration set up by Perkhurov on 6 July. This could have had far-reaching consequences in terms of the active support of the local workers and the response of

<sup>197</sup> Kozlaikov (ed.), ‘Listovki Iaroslavskogo vosstaniia’, p. 50.

<sup>198</sup> Perkhurov, ‘Vospominaniia Perkhurova’, pp. 67–68; Gopper, ‘Iz vospominanii Goppera’, pp. 88–89; Tsvetkov, ‘Iaroslavskoi zemle’, p. 7.

<sup>199</sup> Perkhurov, ‘Vospominaniia Perkhurova’, p. 69.



the 1st Soviet Regiment. It would also have been easy to have sent delegates of the Union to the surrounding villages prior to that date in order to prepare the local population and arrange the arming and practical use of the rural population during the forthcoming battle. Savinkov's failings in the preparation and execution of his allotted part of the planned construction of a new anti-Bolshevik and anti-German front can only be explained by undue optimism and misplaced faith in the Allies, and a disregard for the complexity of dealing with the local population. Savinkov, as noted above, considered the local workers to be too close to the Bolsheviks. This misunderstanding of Iaroslavl's local politics cannot have been down to anything other than a populist's misunderstanding of the gulf that now existed within Russian Social Democracy. The Menshevik-sympathising locals, who could have been of pivotal importance to the uprising, were thus wasted. No matter how disaffected with the Bolsheviks they might have been, they were given insufficient priority by Savinkov.

### *The Underground in North Russia*

The Union for the Salvation of the Fatherland and Freedom led the Iaroslavl uprising at the same time as the UR was making its own preparations further north, again in anticipation of the Allied landing. These preparations began slightly later than those of Savinkov's Union, and this fact is further evidence of the impact of Noulens's undertaking to effect a significant incursion via the Russian North. Chaikovskii, who was to lead the preparations and played a significant if ultimately unsuccessful role in liaising with the Allies, was initially due to accompany Avksent'ev, Argunov, Zenzinov and other luminaries to the East. His route was undoubtedly diverted by the fact that Russian political leadership would be necessary to administer the northern territory liberated from Bolshevik rule by the Allies. The UR clearly decided that Chaikovskii would rule North Russia in the name of the Directory, of which he would become a member at the proposed state conference. This plan, however, did not come to fruition and Chaikovskii never made it to the Ufa State Conference. His attempt at ruling North Russia democratically was short-lived and gives further credibility to the notion that moderate politics had no place in the maelstrom that was Russia in 1918.



The overthrow of Soviet power in Arkhangel'sk was a result of the most successful collaboration between the Russian anti-Bolshevik movement and Allied intervention. The groundwork laid by the UR in North Russia, making full use of the powerful co-operative network, made the removal of the soviet in Arkhangel'sk by General Poole's modest forces a virtual formality, and ensured that there were plenty of Russian politicians of sufficient standing to form a replacement administration. The fact that the collaboration between Russian democrats and the occupying British was so short-lived says a great deal more about the nature of Allied intervention than about the nature of the anti-Bolshevik underground and it is not within the scope of this study to detail the nature of that intervention. Moreover, the Allied intervention has received more than its fair share of historiographical attention in the decades that have passed since it took place.<sup>200</sup> However, the work of the UR in North Russia has been little acknowledged in the historiography of the civil war in North Russia and it is important to look here at that work and at the decisions made by Chaikovskii between July and September, touching on the intervention only when relevant.

The work of the UR in North Russia, that played such a key role in arranging the Allied landing in Arkhangel'sk, began in June when the Petrograd department led by Ignat'ev made a number of contacts with the British military missions through secret officer organisations.<sup>201</sup> These negotiations were well-developed by July, when a representative of the UR in Vologda was informed that preparations for a landing in Arkhangel'sk were nearly ready and that Russian political leaders were required to make their way north in order to form a provisional government. This news was relayed to Ignat'ev in Petrograd and it was decided to form a purely regional government in the Northern Oblast, as the all-Russian government was to be seated beyond the Urals. Ignat'ev made his way to Vologda, accompanied by a number of officers, to attempt to set up a military organisation that could arrange a coup there to

<sup>200</sup> Strakhovsky, L. I. *The Origins of American Intervention in North Russia (1918)* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1937; and Strakhovsky, L. I. *Intervention at Archangel: The Story of Allied Intervention and Russian Counter-Revolution in North Russia, 1918–1920*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944, provide an early pro-American account of the subject. The classic works on Anglo-American intervention in North Russia are Kennan, G. *The Decision to Intervene March–November 1918* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958; and Ullman, R. *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917–1921: Intervention and the War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961. More recent attempts to look into the subject are Kettle, M. *Russia and the Allies 1917–1920. Volume Two: The Road to Intervention March–November 1918*. London: Routledge, 1985 (hereafter *The Road to Intervention*) and Rhodes, B. D. *The Anglo-American War with Russia, 1918–1919: A Diplomatic and Military Tragicomedy*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988 (hereafter *The Anglo-American War*).



coincide with the one in Arkhangel'sk.<sup>202</sup> Meanwhile, Chaikovskii left Moscow to bolster the presence of well-known political figures in the north. In Ustiug, near to the town of Kotlas on the River Dvina, he met his friend and UR affiliate Pitrim Sorokin. Sorokin had been sent to Kotlas to develop the UR's presence near to Arkhangel'sk. Kotlas was a strategic point along the Dvina and it was clearly thought that the fight against the Bolsheviks might take place on the water, rather than along the railway to Vologda. Shortly after meeting with Sorokin, Chaikovskii decided to move further north, promising to relay instructions from Arkhangel'sk.<sup>203</sup> Sorokin believed that his own mission was important, as the Ustiug-Kotlas region lay at the convergence of three rivers – the Dvina, the Sukhona and the Vychega. According to Sorokin, the area was to be the link between the anti-Bolshevik forces in North Russia and the efforts of the other members of the UR in Siberia.<sup>204</sup> Unfortunately for Sorokin, he apparently (unlike Chaikovskii) did not manage to procure the necessary papers enabling his free movement, and he soon became a fugitive from the Cheka. He subsequently abandoned the anti-Bolshevik crusade in favour of a safer, legal existence as a professor of sociology in Pskov.<sup>205</sup>

Meanwhile, in mid-July, as Chaikovskii made his way towards Arkhangel'sk, Ignat'ev was working with the UR-affiliated military representatives in Vologda to arrange an uprising. Ignat'ev, using finances obtained from the British consulate, liaised with a General 'X', with the SR organisation in Vologda and with a number of groups including officers and railway workers.<sup>206</sup> According to S. P. Mel'gunov, the intention of the UR in Vologda was to work with the local co-operatives, which were close to the Popular Socialists, in order to harness the peasant population.<sup>207</sup> The leading members of the UR in Vologda were S. S. Maslov and Ia. T. Dedusenko, both Socialists-Revolutionaries and elected Constituent Assembly deputies (Maslov for Vologodskii guberniia and Dedusenko for Samara guberniia). The members of the UR in Vologda attempted to co-ordinate their efforts with the expected Allied landing and moved some detachments of what the 1920s Soviet historian V. Vladimirova

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<sup>201</sup> See above, pp. 71–72.

<sup>202</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', p. 109.

<sup>203</sup> Sorokin, P. 'Na Lone Prirody', in Goldin, V. I. (ed.) *Belyi Sever 1918–1920gg. Memuary i dokumenty*. Arkhangel'sk: Pravda Severa, 1993, pp. 159–160.

<sup>204</sup> Sorokin, *Leaves From a Russian Diary*, p. 144.

<sup>205</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 152–212.

<sup>206</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', pp. 109–110.

<sup>207</sup> Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 73.

described as 'unemployed riff-raff' to Arkhangel'sk.<sup>208</sup> However, it soon became apparent that the UR was too weak to arrange a coup in Vologda. The decision was made to concentrate on Arkhangel'sk and Maslov and Dedusenko moved there, shortly followed by Ignat'ev.<sup>209</sup> At this point, Chaikovskii made a crucial decision. Maslov attempted to persuade Chaikovskii to remain in Arkhangel'sk and lead the Russian anti-Bolshevik government in North Russia rather than proceed to Siberia to link up with Avksent'ev, Argunov and the rest of the UR leadership. This was initially unsuccessful, until Chaikovskii's old friend E. K. Breshko-Breshkovskaia joined those calling him to stay. Then, according to Mel'gunov, Chaikovskii 'entered into a compromise and decided to stay for a time (two weeks) largely in order to conclude negotiations with representatives of the Allied landing'.<sup>210</sup> The veteran revolutionary was in fact to remain in Arkhangel'sk for the rest of the year.

As far as the Allies were concerned, there were not enough troops at hand to land successfully. The original British plan was, of course, to make use of the Czechoslovak Legion, 20000 of which were supposed to be diverted to the northern port, but the revolt of the Legion in May ruined the plan at the same time as kick-starting the counter-revolution in Siberia. British Consul Lindley, at the end of June, complained that the 'Deplorable failure of the Czecho-Slovaks to come north has altered [the] whole military situation'.<sup>211</sup> General Poole, on his arrival in North Russia, had planned to increase the number of troops at his disposal by recruiting a significant number of Russians. This process began on 18 June but was largely unsuccessful, and the response of the local population has been seen as evidence of apathy.<sup>212</sup> However, the optimistic Poole believed it was due to traditional Russian resistance to the entire concept of volunteering.<sup>213</sup> Regardless, the Russian forces to be at Poole's disposal were few and were dominated by ex-tsarist officers who had made their way north, rather than locals. The UR in Arkhangel'sk continued to plan the coup, Maslov conducting talks with the military organisation in Arkhangel'sk headed by Captain G. E. Chaplin, who led the Russian side of the military planning.<sup>214</sup> Chaplin had been

<sup>208</sup> Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, pp. 376–378.

<sup>209</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', p. 110.

<sup>210</sup> Mel'gunov, *N. V Chaikovskii*, p. 73.

<sup>211</sup> PRO FO 371/3319/1137572: Lindley to Foreign Office, 24 June 1918

<sup>212</sup> Rhodes, *The Anglo-American War*, p. 21.

<sup>213</sup> PRO WO 32/5703: Report from General F. C. Poole on Operations in North Russia, 24 May to 30 September 1918.

<sup>214</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia Ignat'eva', p. 111.



active in Arkhangel'sk since June, when he had entered into relations with the UR and a more right-wing organisation led by the local barrister and Kadet leader in the town Duma, N. A. Startsev, and had also been conducting military talks with the Allies, meeting with Admiral Kemp.<sup>215</sup> However, a number of UR affiliates had expressed doubts over Chaplin's character and suitability for the role. Ignat'ev met with his colleague from Vologda, General 'X', who met with Chaplin and judged him to be an inexperienced man who was not serious enough for the task ahead. This prompted Ignat'ev to contact Dr Kovalevskii to discuss Chaplin. Kovalevskii, who knew Chaplin well from their time together in Petrograd in the former's officer organisation, informed Ignat'ev that he considered Chaplin to be a 'light-minded adventurer'.<sup>216</sup> Chaplin's association with Startsev certainly meant that he was dallying equally with the moderate left and the right of the political spectrum, as the local Kadet S. N. Gorodetskii put it, the two gathered together 'the most rightist elements' of the Russian officer community.

The British were so doubtful of the possibility of success that a postponement of the landing, scheduled for 3 August, was considered. This was changed, however, and after arriving on the nearby island of Kandalashka with the rest of the Allied diplomatic community, Consul Lindley informed Poole that proceedings had to be brought forward, not put back. Poole later explained, 'on July 30th, I received information from Mr. Lindley who had just reached Kandalashka that the state in Archangel was so desperate that our friends there had decided that it was impossible to delay any longer and that they had arranged for a revolution against the Government to start on 1 August and that unless we could arrive very shortly after the outbreak it would be certainly suppressed'.<sup>217</sup> It is not clear exactly who approached Lindley with this plea to hasten the landing. It could have been Chaikovskii or another member of the UR in Arkahngel'sk, or it could have been Chaplin or Startsev. Regardless, the consul had to a degree been misled. There was little chance of the revolt being suppressed. The local Commissar, Kedrov, was under no illusions as to what was in store and had declared martial law as early as June 26. The situation was

<sup>215</sup> Gorodetskii, S. N. 'Obrazovanie severnoi oblasti', in Goldin, V. I. (ed.) *Belyi sever 1918–1920gg. Memuary i dokumenty*. Arkhangel'sk: Pravda Severa, 1993 (hereafter 'Obrazovanie severnoi oblasti'), p. 33.

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>217</sup> PRO, WO 32/5703. Report by General F. C. Poole on operations in North Russia, 24 May 1918 to 30 September 1918 (sent 5 October 1918).

so stark by the end of July that the US Consul Felix Cole had written that an 'almost de facto state of war' existed.<sup>218</sup> Despite this, there was no successful pre-emptive move by the Arkhangel'sk Soviet and it is clear from the ease with which Soviet power was removed that the Bolsheviks were weak in Arkhangel'sk. From this perspective, the intervention in North Russia appears to have been a rather minor affair. Chaplin himself later described the port in the summer of 1918 as a 'dead town', with a brigade of only three hundred to three hundred and fifty Red troops fresh from the Iaroslavl battle, and a small number of Latvians and other troops.<sup>219</sup> The Russian anti-Bolshevik forces were weak, and the number of troops at Poole's disposal pitiful. The only reason for the success of the landing was the lack of resistance shown by the Bolsheviks.

The forces at Chaplin's disposal numbered no more than five hundred, but by the time of the Allied landing between 1 and 2 August, many of the Soviet forces had fled. The evacuation had begun the previous day, when the appearance of Allied seaplanes had caused panic.<sup>220</sup> According to Chaplin's account, the Bolsheviks fled in expectation of a far more significant landing.<sup>221</sup> The combined forces of the British and the Russians bombarded several points of resistance into submission but the evacuation of the Bolsheviks meant that the intervening forces were largely moving into empty territory, and very few leading Bolshevik officials were captured.<sup>222</sup> Ultimately, the weakness of the combined anti-Bolshevik forces did not matter. Despite the fact that there were only around six hundred British troops, the mere threat of the Allies was sufficient to secure the capture of the entire region around Arkhangel'sk.<sup>223</sup> The Bolsheviks were far more concerned with ensuring that Poole was not able to make further progress southwards. In fact, it soon became apparent that it was one thing to make a successful landing, but another entirely to move on and establish a genuine front in Russia. Poole pursued the Soviet forces along the two main routes south of Arkhangel'sk – the railway to Vologda and the Dvina river. Both proved relatively easy for the Reds to block and as one émigré historian later put it, the peculiarity of the region, with its sparsely populated tundra, made movement

<sup>218</sup> Rhodes, *The Anglo-American War*, p. 22.

<sup>219</sup> Chaplin, 'Dva Perevorota', pp. 51–52.

<sup>220</sup> Gorodetskii, 'Obrazovanie severnoi oblasti', p. 38.

<sup>221</sup> Chaplin, 'Dva Perevorota', p. 58.

<sup>222</sup> Gorodetskii, 'Obrazovanie severnoi oblasti', pp. 38–39.

<sup>223</sup> Chaikovskii confirmed this figure at a conference on 11 August. See Vladimirova, *God sluzhby*



difficult and it would be erroneous to describe the situation as a 'proper' front.<sup>224</sup> Ignat'ev, who was sent from Arkhangel'sk to Vologda to arrange an uprising, attempted to plan a front that would stretch from Vologda along the railway to the Northern Dvina just below Kotlas to the town of Vel'ska. However, he waited in vain for Allied troops, merely receiving some financial aid, and eventually his plans were foiled by a series of arrests which forced Ignat'ev back to Arkhangel'sk.<sup>225</sup> The prospect of a significant intervention by the Allies that would give real impetus to the kind of counter-revolution envisaged by the UR dwindled away to nothing in August, as the progress towards Vologda and Kotlas slowed right down and Poole did not receive any reinforcement from the Allies, who were concentrating on the Western Front. Arkhangel'sk was under occupation and was administered by a UR-sponsored government, but was isolated one thousand kilometres from Moscow and fourteen hundred kilometres from the nearest anti-Bolshevik government in Ekaterinburg.

Of course, the composition and initial declarations of the new government, called the Supreme Administration of the Northern Oblast, had already been worked out. Chaikovskii had worked on these formulations in late July with Maslov, Dedusenko, the SR Ivanov, and Ignat'ev.<sup>226</sup> The full composition of the government was as follows:

Chairman: N. V Chaikovskii (Popular Socialist, Constituent Assembly deputy for Viatka

Secretary: P. Iu Zubov (Kadet)

Other members: Ia. T. Dedusenko (SR, Constituent Assembly deputy for Samara); A. A. Ivanov (SR, Constituent Assembly deputy for Arkhangel'sk); A. I. Gukovskii (SR, Constituent Assembly deputy for Novgorod guberniia); G. A. Martushinskii (SR, Constituent Assembly deputy for Kazan); M. A. Likhach (SR, Constituent Assembly deputy for Northern oblast); S. S. Maslov (SR, Constituent Assembly member for

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*'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 380.

<sup>224</sup> Zaitsov, A. *1918 God: Ocherki po istorii russkoi grazhdanskoi voine*. Paris: [n.p.], 1934, (hereafter *1918 God*), p. 218.

<sup>225</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia', pp. 111–115. On the assistance Ignat'ev received from the British mission, see Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 380.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, p. 111.

Vologodskii guberniia); N. A. Startsev (Kadet, Deputy Chairman of the Arkhangel'sk Duma).<sup>227</sup>

As can be seen from the composition of the government, the PSR dominated. Chaikovskii was clearly chosen as chairman for a number of reasons, but the fact that he was not an SR and in fact represented an inter-party organization were at least as important as the fact that he was a well-known figure, a native of the region and fluent in English. The inclusion of Zubov and Startsev was clearly a concession to the right-wing elements of Arkhangel'sk society, as well as to the abundance of officers (who were over-represented as a class amongst the Russian forces present in the town). This thin veil of cross-party consensus did little to disguise what was essentially a government of unremarkable SRs. This government was to last a little over five weeks and during that time did little other than antagonize the army and the intervening forces, in particular General Poole, who later recalled that:

The government which had assumed control about two hours before our arrival here was hopeless to a degree. It was composed entirely of Left Social Revolutionaries who in politics and ideas are not far from Bolsheviks. They assumed control – on paper – over the whole of Northern Russia and had devoted the whole of their energies to that District. Their immediate needs of urgent necessities for the town and occupied districts they absolutely neglected. They were totally incapable of understanding the necessity of any military precautions being taken for the safety of the port. Any action of this kind they considered repressive and as undue interference with the liberties of the people.<sup>228</sup>

A detailed discussion of the Supreme Administration of the Northern Oblast and its successor, the Provisional Government of the Northern Oblast, is outside the scope of this study. Substantial archival material exists on the regimes in Moscow alone and an in-depth analysis of the whole period, up to February 1920, would be a welcome addition to the historiography of the civil war. As far as the work of the Union of Regeneration is concerned, although certain individual members remained in North Russia after the arrest of the Chaikovskii administration, including the chairman of the government himself, the second, longer period of the counter-

<sup>227</sup> GARF, f. 16 op. 1 dd. 1–25; Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 76; Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 381.



revolution in North Russia had little to do with the democratic anti-Bolshevik movement envisaged by the UR and the National Centre in Moscow in the spring of 1918. A glance at the records of the Chaikovskii government as it worked before 6 September, however, reveals that, although Poole was almost laughably off the mark in his assessment of the regime as being 'Left Social Revolutionary' and 'not far from Bolsheviks', his view that it was 'hopeless to a degree' was not without foundation. The records of the government's meetings show that for the month of August, Chaikovskii's quickly assembled cabinet was unsure of what its role should be and rather than look to the importance of the anti-Bolshevik struggle was more keen on debating minor issues such as the specific powers of different departments and voicing concern for the conduct of the Allies. Principles such as the re-establishment of democracy, denationalisation and revival of industry, and the resurrection of the co-operative networks were discussed, but few concrete measures were taken.<sup>229</sup>

General Poole did not seem to realise that his conduct had great significance to the government. Chaikovskii's administration was keen to show its revolutionary credibility and independence from the Allies. Therefore, when General Poole declared martial law and banned the raising of the red flag (which, according to Lindley, he did 'under the belief that [it] was peculiar to Bolsheviks'), he made the government appear powerless and irrelevant.<sup>230</sup> The impression formed by Lindley was that Poole was behaving as though he was in 'conquered territory', and that 'all [that the] inhabitants and Russian authorities had to do was obey'.<sup>231</sup> Small wonder, then, that Chaikovskii government felt unable to act of its own accord and spent much of its time complaining about General Poole. Whether or not the authorities supposedly in control of the region were guilty of inertia, the Russian officers roaming the town, led by their new commander-in-chief Captain Chaplin, soon began to plot a change of leadership. Chaplin later claimed he was dissatisfied primarily with the composition of the government, feeling in particular that the SRs Maslov, Dedusenko and Likhach had too much influence over Chaikovskii.<sup>232</sup> He consequently began to meet with

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<sup>228</sup> PRO WO 32/5703: Report by General F. C. Poole on operations in North Russia, 24 May to 30 September 1918, sent October 5 1918.

<sup>229</sup> GARF, f. 16 op. 1 dd. 1-25 contains the minutes of these early meetings.

<sup>230</sup> PRO, FO 371/3319/143998. Lindley to Foreign Office, August 12, 1918.

<sup>231</sup> *loc.cit.*

<sup>232</sup> Chaplin, 'Dva Perevorota', p. 65.

Startsev as well as with other officers to discuss changing the government.<sup>233</sup> According to Gorodetskii, a local Kadet, the majority of the local intelligentsia felt the same way as Chaplin, and considered the government too partisan and too socialist.<sup>234</sup>

However, this was not the only cause of the coup that took place on 6 September. Chaikovskii himself later declared that the reasons for the decision of the military command to change the government were nothing to do with its policies or its composition. Chaikovskii explained that he had gone to great efforts to convince Chaplin and others that the government would restore the kind of political pluralism seen in the Provisional Government period of 1917 and that decrees passed by the Bolsheviks would be changed as and when needed. Private trade was to be encouraged and industry denationalised. In addition to this, however, Chaikovskii recalled that his government was taking steps to reorganise Chaplin's headquarters, which had mushroomed to a staff of nearly 1000 over the course of August, as more officers had arrived. The decision had been made that the presence of so many officers in Arkhangel'sk was dangerous and that they would be better employed at the front. In short, the government wisely saw Chaplin's officer cronies as a threat to the democratic order they wished to stamp upon the Northern Oblast and decided to keep them at arms length. In this light, the actions taken by Chaplin and his staff, in arresting Chaikovskii and other socialist members of the government, Maslov, Gukovskii and Martinskii on 6 September, can be seen as the final victory of the reactionary military over the moderate politicians who were endeavouring to control them.<sup>235</sup> Chaplin, of course, had made capital out of the fact that the Supreme Administration was SR-dominated and thus was able to count on the approval of the reactionary intelligentsia dominating society in Arkhangel'sk in the summer of 1918.

The coup undoubtedly also had the tacit approval of General Poole. Poole visited Lindley as early as 11 August and discussed the plans of the Russian officers. Poole told Lindley he had replied 'he would remain neutral as Russian Government was no concern of his'. As Lindley believed at the time, 'This answer was in [the]

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>234</sup> Gorodetskii, 'Obrazovanie severnoi oblasti', p. 40.

<sup>235</sup> Hoover Institution, Mel'gunov Collection, Box 13, file 17: Chaikovskii, N.V, 'Ob Arkhangel'skom Perevorote 1918g.', p. 3.



circumstances encouragement to turn it [the government] out.'<sup>236</sup> That Poole had encouraged Chaplin was also a belief held by Lindley later, at the time of the coup. On the day of the arrest of the government and its imprisonment in the monastery on Solovetskii island, he notified his superiors in Whitehall that, 'Although General Poole did not approve of coup d'état I have no doubt that [the] language of his officers led Captain Chaplin to believe it would be winked at.'<sup>237</sup> The role played by General Poole in encouraging Chaplin should not be underestimated. When later meeting with Poole's replacement as British military commander in North Russia, General Ironside, Chaplin claimed to have removed the government 'out of sheer boredom', and added 'after all, old Chaikovsky wasn't of any use to General Poole'.<sup>238</sup> Poole had also formed working relations with other officers within Chaplin's staff, such as Captain Berg and the former SR M. M. Filonenko, who were known to have been in favour of a more right-wing government.<sup>239</sup> Chaikovskii's cabinet was surrounded by conspirators, and although it is unlikely that General Poole actively encouraged the plans for a *coup d'état*, Lindley's judgement that Poole made it sufficiently clear that the coup would be 'winked at' appears to have been quite accurate.

The complicity of the local Kadets in the coup is also quite clear, both from the prior discussions between Chaplin and Startsev and from the fact that the new Provisional Government of the Northern Oblast was predominately drawn from their ranks. Startsev became the new 'Head of the Civil Sphere of the Northern Oblast', alongside fellow Kadets Gorodetskii, P. Iu. Zubov and N. V. Mefodiev, with Colonel Durov and Duke I. A. Kurakin making up the remainder of the executive. It is significant that the new regime entitled itself 'Provisional Government of the Northern Oblast'. By the time of the coup, the Ufa State Conference was about to convene and was due to elect a provisional all-Russian government, as planned by the UR and the National Centre in June. The administration in Arkhangel'sk sent no representatives to the State Conference and, in proclaiming itself as a government, was clearly not undertaking automatically to submit to the authority of the Ufa Directory. As such, the coup of 6 September was the end of the democratic counter-

<sup>236</sup> PRO FO 371/3319/143998: Lindley to Foreign Office, 12 August, 1918.

<sup>237</sup> PRO FO 371/3319/154056: Lindley to Foreign Office, 6 September, 1918.

<sup>238</sup> Ironside, Field Marshall Lord Edmund *Archangel 1918-1919*. London: Constable, 1953, p. 32.

<sup>239</sup> Ignat'ev, 'Vospominaniia', p. 119.



revolution in North Russia. Arkhangel'sk was to be isolated for the remainder of the civil war until the Provisional Government of the Northern Oblast fell to the Red Army in February 1920.

Chaikovskii and his colleagues remained imprisoned on Solovetskii Island for two days. During this time, the SR members of the former government who had evaded arrest, Ivanov and Dedusenko, had mounted a campaign for their release which was successful in arousing the sympathy of United States Ambassador David Francis, who had been one of the senior members of the Allied diplomatic corps on Kandalashka, in favour of the Chaikovskii administration. The local population also carried out a fairly successful strike. Under these circumstances, Chaikovskii and his friends were returned to Arkhangel'sk, and Chaikovskii continued his role as Chairman of the government. However, although Chaplin lost his position and was sent to the front (the avoidance of which had prompted him to act against the government in the first place) the *coup d'état* was clearly a success for the reactionary circles in Arkhangel'sk, as a change in power was effected. Chaikovskii became a figurehead, a concession to the masses, and had little power. It is curious that the veteran revolutionary was willing to remain in Arkhangel'sk as a cosmetic socialist signing decrees formulated by a regime dominated by local Kadets and the military. Why did Chaikovskii not head for Ufa, where he was sure to be named as a member of the all-Russian government? One possible reason is the fact that the Bolsheviks now had a far more solid presence in the territory en route to Siberia than they had had in June and July. The Red Army was successfully beginning to fight back against the forces of the tiring Czechoslovak legion and Komuch's People's Army. The road to Ufa would have involved crossing a potential war zone – as one Russian saying puts it, 'a living dog is better than a dead lion'. However, this did not prevent Maslov, Dedusenko and Likhach from leaving for Siberia. Another possibility, and perhaps a more likely one, is that Chaikovskii saw that he might still have a role to play in North Russia. S. P. Mel'gunov, whose biography of Chaikovskii often comes across as a thinly disguised autobiography, wrote of Chaikovskii's attempts to steer the new government along a 'middle course' between right and left. Chaikovskii remained in Arkhangel'sk for four months after the coup, before handing over to Zubov and leaving for Paris, presumably tired of his powerless moderating role. The collapse of



his efforts, and of those close to him in North Russia, left Chaikovskii's colleagues who had headed east as the sole guardians of the plans of the Union of Regeneration.

## Chapter 3

### **The Union of Regeneration and the 'Democratic Counter-Revolution' in the East**

It was the east of the Russian heartland, especially the Volga towns of Samara and Kazan, that provided the setting for the 'Democratic Counter-Revolution', as originally applied, by Ivan Maiskii, to the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly (Komuch); and it was on an area stretching from the Volga to the furthest reaches of the old Russian Empire, the Far Eastern port of Vladivostok, that the Union of Regeneration focussed its attention in the summer and autumn of 1918. At no other time during the Russian Civil War were the opportunities for the anti-Bolsheviks so great; and at no other time was such an effort made at unifying the forces at their disposal. The study of the attempts made by the UR to bring Komuch together with other regional governments, most importantly the Omsk-based Provisional Siberian Government (PSG), to form an all-Russian government which would be recognised not only by the major political parties of the anti-Bolshevik struggle (the PSR, the Kadet Party and the Mensheviks) but also by the Volunteer Army based in South Russia and led by General Alekseev (and later, after Alekseev's death in September 1918, by General Denikin), is essential to a fuller understanding of the civil war. The fragmentary nature of anti-Bolshevik politics, part of the legacy of the 1917 Provisional Government, is evinced more clearly by the events surrounding the build-up to the Ufa State Conference, the formation of the All-Russian Provisional Government (the Directory), and its short and feeble existence, than by any other episode of the civil war. Moreover, the UR's efforts were the only real attempt at providing some sort of administrative, and therefore military, cohesion in the anti-Bolshevik camp. Clearly, the only common ground shared by the disparate elements in Russian society who actively opposed Soviet power consisted of the desire to see Bolshevism crushed, although most also insisted on preserving Russia's status as an Allied power. If there was to be any single authority governing anti-Bolshevik Russia and conducting its armed struggle against the Red Army, it would have to be a



coalition. Politicians of different political hues would not only have to be persuaded to talk to each other, but would have to compromise with their former political enemies. Just as those on the left (represented mainly by Komuch and the PSR) needed the right to deliver the loyalty of the thousands of former tsarist officers who would inevitably have to lead their army, the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia (represented in 1918 mostly by the Kadet Party) needed the left in order to assist in the formulation of a political platform that could appeal to the urban proletariat and the peasantry. This was necessary in order that conquered territory was not easily recaptured by the Bolsheviks, so that an anti-Bolshevik industrial base was maintained that could ensure a satisfactory supply of weapons and munitions, and so that urban areas and (more importantly) the front, were supplied with sufficient food. Without political (as opposed to merely military) leadership, the anti-Bolshevik camp would not succeed in doing this, and for that reason the events described in this chapter are an essential part of the civil war and constitute the most important part of the work of the anti-Bolshevik underground.

### *The Revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion and the Beginning of the Civil War*

The part played by the UR in the civil war is in a large part tied in with the period known as the 'Democratic Counter-Revolution' and, in particular, with the build-up to and consequences of the Ufa State Conference. The 'Democratic Counter-Revolution' is a problematic title for the period leading up to the assumption of power in Omsk by Admiral Kolchak. Much of the political goings-on around and to the east of the Volga-Urals region were far from democratic in character, and many of the leading figures of this episode of the civil war were little concerned with democracy. However, the phrase allows an understanding of the distinction between the anti-Bolshevik activity of the months before 18 November 1918 and that led by the militaristic, dictatorial regime of the 'Supreme Ruler' after that date, particularly when applied to the Volga, Urals and Siberia between May and November of that year.<sup>1</sup> The Democratic Counter-Revolution certainly had roots in the opposition to

<sup>1</sup> For a thought-provoking discussion of the chronology of the Democratic Counter-Revolution, see Shikanov, L. A. 'K voprosu o khronologicheskikh ramkakh 'demokraticheskoi' kontrrevoliutsii v Sibiri', in Korablev, Iu. V. and Shishkin, V. I. (eds), *Iz istorii interventsii i grazhdanskoi voyny v Sibiri i*



Bolshevism that came, in particular, as a result of the dispersal the Constituent Assembly in January, much of which has been detailed above, as well as in the provincial and regionalist opposition that developed in early 1918, some of which is outlined below. However, it is fair to argue that the widely spread and unco-ordinated pockets of resistance to Soviet power gained focus and became a threat to the 'Triumphal March of Soviet Power' only with the events of 25 May at the railway station in Cheliabinsk.

There, a group of the 38000-strong legion, comprising of Czech and Slovak prisoner of war who had deserted the Austro-Hungarian army, as well as many of their compatriots who had lived in Russia since before the outbreak of war, clashed with Austrian and Hungarian former prisoners on their way home under the provisions of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The Czechoslovaks, whose allegiance under the political direction of their future president, Tomas Masaryk, was to the Allies, desired only to make their way to the Western Front in order to fight their enemies and former imperial oppressors. The fate of the Czechs had been the matter of some debate in high political circles in London, Paris and Washington. Plans to move part of the legion to Arkhangel'sk were made by the British – possibly, as has been suggested by one study, to link up with a British landing and perhaps to coincide with the uprising of the Union for the Salvation of the Fatherland and Freedom in Iaroslavl.<sup>2</sup> However, these plans had been postponed due to protracted wrangling with the French, who desired to move the Czechs to Vladivostok, and thence to the Western Front. As result of this, the legion was dispersed along the Trans-Siberian Railway, frustrated, and eager to involve itself in the armed struggle. Coupled with the insensitive management of their transportation by the Soviet authorities, this frustration was enough to turn the incident at Cheliabinsk into an armed revolt by the entire legion within a matter of days.<sup>3</sup> The Legion was by far the strongest and most

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*na Dal'nem Vostoke, 1917–1922gg.* Novosibirsk, Nauka, 1985 (hereafter 'K voprosu o khronologicheskikh ramkakh', pp. 63–67.

<sup>2</sup> Kettle, *The Road to Intervention*, pp. 75–76.

<sup>3</sup> The most comprehensive work on the Czechoslovak Legion is Bradley, J. F. N. *The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia, 1914–1920*. New York: East European Monographs, 1991. See also Bradley, J. F. N. 'The Czechoslovak Revolt against the Bolsheviks', *Soviet Studies* Vol 15 (1963–1964), pp. 124–151; Fic, V. M. *The Bolsheviks and the Czechoslovak Legion: The Origin of their Armed Conflict (March–May 1918)*. New Delhi: Abhinav, 1978. For a recent version the events of the uprising by the son of Lt. Colonel P. P. Petrov of the legion; see Petroff, S. P. *Remembering a Forgotten War: Civil War in Eastern European Russia and Siberia, 1918–1920*. New York: East European Monographs, 2000 (hereafter *Remembering a Forgotten War*), pp. 1–15.



hardened force in Russia at the time and became the key factor in this, the earliest phase of the civil war.

It was in this phase of the civil war that the UR had great impact. The result of this impact was, of course, far from that which had been envisaged in Moscow by its leaders during the time of negotiations with the National Centre and other individuals. The UR, however, faced a great many difficulties in performing its self-appointed task of unifying a vast territory, stretching in theory from the Volga to Vladivostok, against the common foe. It is a fact that the UR succeeded in this task for some time, or at least appeared to be doing so. It is also a fact that some of the most important reasons why the UR did not ultimately succeed concern the history of the anti-Bolshevik movement in Siberia prior to its arrival, the complicated political scene that awaited the UR in the east, and the compromises the UR was willing to enter into in order to achieve its primary aim. The way in which the UR managed to overcome (or, more accurately, manoeuvre around) the obstacles in its path was not only vital to its success, it also played a large part in making that success temporary. In order to understand fully the essential role played by the UR in this turbulent early stage of the civil war, it is necessary to set the scene somewhat. The difficulties encountered in unifying the newly liberated territory by the UR, a body largely made up of SRs, relate in no small part to the complicated relationship that had developed between the PSR and Siberian regionalism since the February Revolution. The following narrative section, then, whilst containing little that is new, is necessary to provide a backdrop for the activity of the UR, and to explain the difficulties it encountered having made its way east.

Before the active involvement of the Czechoslovak Legion, the counter-revolution lacked real muscle. Despite the relative ease with which the 'Triumphal March of Soviet Power' had extended to Vladivostok, a process which was completed by February, the Bolsheviks' hold on power was tenuous. Soviet power existed in Siberia mainly by virtue of the city soviets, which had dissolved other organs of local government such as the zemstvos and, in particular, the Siberian Oblast Duma (Sibobduma), which had formed at the end of 1917 and convened in Tomsk, the centre of regionalist politics in Siberia. However, Siberia was dominated by peasantry, and a peasantry of a far less impoverished and land-hungry kind to that to which the Bolsheviks' policy of land seizure had appealed to so greatly in 1917. Rather than land, the price of grain was the hot issue. The co-operative movement was



well developed in Siberia, and was responsible for much of the trade in grain. The co-operatives were nationalised soon after the coming of the Bolshevik revolution to Siberia. However, the Soviet administration had found the steady delivery of grain into European Russia problematic, and had resorted to coercive methods. A survey of 102 peasant 'family' heads in May 1918 conducted by the non-party journal *Sibirskii vestnik* showed sixty-five per cent held strongly anti-Bolshevik views.<sup>4</sup> An anti-Bolshevik government, the Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia (PGAS), elected hastily by the Sibobduma on the night of 27–28 January 1918 and led by veteran SR P. Ia. Derber, had fled to Vladivostok, where it continued to exist but posed little threat to the Soviet regime. Derber had left behind an underground group in Novonikolaevsk, the Western Siberian Commisariat (WSC), which formally convened on 14 February. Its task was to coordinate the underground anti-Bolshevik struggle in western Siberia, and, funded by the cooperative movement, it built up some considerable forces, led by Colonel G.N. Grishin-Almazov, a confirmed regionalist who, like many regionalists in 1917, had nominally aligned himself to the PSR and who worked for the giant buyers' co-operative *Zakupsbyt* prior to his involvement with the WSC.<sup>5</sup>

However, the issue of loyalty to the PSR was one which divided the anti-Bolshevik movement in Siberia. When General Flug arrived from South Russia on behalf of the Volunteer Army to assist the eastern underground, he estimated that there were around eight thousand officers available, with the largest share, around three thousand, in the Omsk area.<sup>6</sup> Flug's attempts to impose some organisational unity between units who supported the PSR and those who most certainly did not were unsuccessful. This lack of cohesion, together with financial problems which restricted the number of paid officers, made the anti-Bolshevik movement weak in Siberia, despite its massive numerical potential. There were, though, a number of underground groups in Tomsk, the traditional seat of Siberian regionalism, who coincidentally were planning an uprising on the eve of the Czechoslovak revolt and,

<sup>4</sup> Berk, S. M. 'The *Coup d'État* of Admiral Kolchak: Counter-Revolution in Siberia and Eastern Russia, 1917–1918'. Columbia University PhD Thesis (1971) (hereafter '*Coup d'État* of Admiral Kolchak'), pp. 107, 121. On the growth of anti-Bolshevik feeling and activity in Siberia, see Guins, G. K. *Sibir', Soiuzniki i Kolchak*. Peking: Tipo-lit. Russkoi dukhovnoi missii, 1921 (hereafter *Sibir'*), Vol. 1, pp. 50–64.

<sup>5</sup> Rupp, S. 'The Struggle in the East: Opposition Politics in Siberia, 1918', *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies* No. 1304 (1998), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Vegman, V. 'Sibirskie kontrrevoliutsionnye organizatsii 1918g.', *Sibirskie ogni*, No. 1 (1928), pp. 137–138.



as the small number of Soviet forces in Siberia were distracted by the events in Cheliabinsk, anti-Bolshevik units found it easy to displace Soviet power in Tomsk between 28 and 31 May 1918.<sup>7</sup> The revolt of the Czechoslovaks was key to the liberation of other parts of Siberia, in that underground officer groups were stirred from their slumber and, inspired by the example of the Czechs, rallied around the cause. This allowed the WSC to declare its authority in the area as early as 1 June.

### *The PSR and Siberian Regionalism*

The schism in the anti-Bolshevik movement between generally pro-SR leftism and the more bourgeois sensibilities that had previously retarded the growth of the counter-revolution continued to play havoc with politics in liberated Siberia. As a number of prominent regionalists came to the fore, the strained relationship between regionalism and the PSR became more significant and explains why the position of the SRs, which may at first glance appear to have been strong, was in fact very shaky.

Regionalism in Siberia predated the formation of the revolutionary political parties in Russia, and was closely linked with Tomsk University, which had been established in 1888. The regionalists were led by M. N. Iadrintsev and later by G. N. Potanin, who was still the father of the movement at the time of the February Revolution. During the Constitutional Monarchy period, there was no regionalist party; however, regionalists elected to the Dumas tended to align themselves with the more left-wing Kadets and rightist SRs. Potanin himself presided over the first Siberian Regional Conference in early August 1917, whilst many regionalists, although not Potanin himself, were joining the PSR. Among those who joined the PSR were I. I. Serebrennikov and I. A. Mikhailov, who were both to play a prominent role in Siberia in 1918.<sup>8</sup> However, as the Bolsheviks took power from the PSR in European Russia and the position of the party west of the Urals collapsed, Serebrennikov himself formed the opinion that the PSR was less interested in Siberian issues than in using Siberia as a base for its all-Russian anti-Bolshevik activity, attempting as it did to pack regionalist congresses in October and December. This

<sup>7</sup> Vegman, V. 'Kak i pochemu pala v 1918g. Sovetskaia vlast', *Sibirskie ogni*, No. 1–2 (Jan–Apr 1923), pp. 132–140.

<sup>8</sup> For more detail on the origins of Siberian regionalism and its importance in forming the basis for the counter-revolution in the region see Berk, 'Coup d'État of Admiral Kolchak', pp. 123–147; and Smele, *Civil War In Siberia*, pp. 15–21.

perceived insincerity of the party towards Siberia, together with the fact that many 'SR-Regionalists' such as Derber were not of Siberian origin but were in fact recent immigrants, caused men such as Serebrennikov to forget their allegiance to the PSR. The key event which strained relations between the SRs and the regionalists was the SR-dominated regionalist congress's exclusion of non-socialist parties and institutions from the Sibobduma, convened in January. Serebrennikov, Mikhailov and the man who was to inherit Potanin's role as leader of Siberian regionalism, P. V. Vologodskii, saw that the PSR was attempting to swallow regionalism whole. Therefore, although the Sibobduma, the PGAS and even the WSC were dominated by the PSR or those sympathetic to it, the history of relations between SRs and regionalists made the attitude of prominent Siberians, the majority of whom were not socialists, hostile to the PSR. On paper, then, the position of the PSR in Siberia was strong. However, the reality was rather different. Men such as Grishin-Almazov, Serebrennikov and Mikhailov may have once been associated with the PSR but that was only for a short time and this dalliance had made them, if anything, disillusioned with the party and hostile to it.<sup>9</sup>

### *The First Omsk Coup d'État*

The position of the PSR as the major political rival to Bolshevism in Russia surely hinged on the successful establishment of a base that could provide manpower for an army and economic support for the war effort, including the supply of food and munitions. The establishment of the WSC as the main Siberian anti-Bolshevik authority in Novonikolaevsk, headquarters of *Zakupsbyt*, on 1 June, together with the opening of the Sibobduma in Tomsk and the establishment of the Committee of the Constituent Assembly in Samara, together with the re-emerging of the PGAS in the Far East, may make it appear, at first glance, that this was taking place in June, as the WSC was certainly sympathetic to the PSR and both Komuch and the Sibobduma were dominated by the party. However, this would be to ignore other forces that were emerging in Omsk. Cossack circles nominally attached to the WSC and based around

<sup>9</sup> Shilovskii, M. V. 'Sibirskoe oblastnichestvo i kontrrevoliutsiia: k probleme vsaimotnosheniia', in Korablev, Iu. V. And Shishkin, V. I. (eds.) *Iz istorii interventsii i grazhdanskoi voiny v Sibiri i na Dal'nem Vostoke, 1917–1922gg.* Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1985, pp. 169–173 has more on the way the PSR used regionalist slogans to gain popularity in Siberia. See Berk, 'Coup d'État of Admiral Kolchak', pp. 132–151, for the increasing hostility between the PSR and regionalists.



Omsk, as well as Omsk-centred Trade and Industry groups, were hostile to the PSR and soon the Omsk Military Industrial Committee, led by Professor V. V. Sapozhnikov, the rector of Tomsk University, formed a 'Business Administration' to assist the WSC in the governing of Western Siberia. The WSC apparently did not see this as a threat and moved from its co-operative dominated stronghold to the more reactionary bourgeois town of Omsk on 7 June. This proved to be the undoing of the Commissariat, as the political climate in Omsk was far from friendly to the WSC and there was much intriguing against it by those parts of Omsk society which had their own political agenda. Within three weeks the WSC was replaced by the Provisional Government of Siberia (PSG), which was formed by the Business Administration. Sapozhnikov's group called on eminent Siberian regionalists to enter into an administration more in the *oblastnik* tradition, and thus came to be led by Vologodskii, with Mikhailov and Serebrennikov being joined by V. M. Krutovskii, G. B. Patushinskii and M. B. Shatilov (the last of whom was called on to represent Derber's government, which was still isolated from events in Western Siberia).<sup>10</sup> Thus, Siberia as whole was by the end of June governed by a group of regionalists with some degree of hostility to the PSR and which, under the instigation mainly of Mikhailov, was pursuing an increasingly right-wing direction and building a powerful and politically conservative army with a high proportion of officers and Cossacks. In fact, Mikhailov, whose notoriety as a political charlatan was to grow throughout 1918, had plenty of opportunity to steer the PSG in an aggressively authoritarian direction, as Vologodskii was a very sick man who only accepted his post as head of the government under extreme duress. His diary reveals him to have been a very unwell during June, when he was often confined to his bed and regularly lost consciousness.<sup>11</sup> During the first weeks of the existence of the PSG, a struggle began with the Sibobduma that continued for three months and ended in a bloody confrontation over who had sovereign power in the region and over when the Duma should be allowed to meet.<sup>12</sup> Mikhailov's authoritarian tendencies and the relentless build-up of the military in Omsk led to the exit of Krutovskii, Patushinskii and Shatilov, the more liberal members of the PSG, within a month and, with the PGAS

<sup>10</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, Vol. 1, pp. 89–98.

<sup>11</sup> Lyandres, S. and Wulff, D. (eds) *A Chronicle of the Civil War in Siberia and Exile in China: The Diaries of Petr Vasil'evich Vologodskii, 1918–1925* Volume 1. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002 (hereafter *A Chronicle of the Civil War*), pp. 88–92 (diary entries from 17 to 22 June.)

<sup>12</sup> Vegman, V. 'Sibolduma [sic]', *Sibirskie ogni* No. 4 (July–August 1923) (hereafter 'Sibolduma [sic]'), pp. 89–95.

isolated and rapidly running out of funds, the governance of Siberia was in the hands of a few men who had little interest in democracy and who were very close to military and bourgeois circles. The political complexion of Siberia had, then, in the course of a few months (and due in large part to the way Siberian opposition to Bolshevism manifested itself and acted), changed from one which was closely tied with democratic-minded institutions such as the regional duma, the zemstvos and the co-operative network, to one that was dominated by military and bourgeois groups centred around Omsk (termed the 'Omsk clique' by Paul Dotsenko, a official of the WSC who became a memoirist of the period) and led by the PSG.<sup>13</sup>

### *Omsk versus Samara*

As in Siberia, the beneficiaries of the Czechoslovak revolt were those who had conducted the anti-Bolshevik struggle during the months prior to June 1918. The SRs I. M. Brushvit, P.D. Klimushkin and B. K. Fortunatov were sent to the Volga by the Eighth Council of the PSR, held in the aftermath of the signature of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. A military plan to seize Kazan, Samara, Saratov and Simbirsk, formulated by General Lebedev and the UR's General Boldyrev did not come to fruition. However, the Czechoslovak revolt came as a bonus for the PSR and, as an eight-thousand-strong force surrounded Samara on 7 June, the party acted quickly. After sounding out local party organisations and securing the blessing of the Czechoslovaks, the three SRs moved quickly to establish the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly (Komuch) in Samara, under the protection of the Legion. Fellow SRs I. P. Nesterov and V. K. Vol'skii soon arrived, and the Committee formed a five-man presidium, with Vol'skii as Chairman. Komuch was to expand its membership to around seventy by mid-September, but was always dominated by the PSR. The sole exceptions were I. Maiskii, a Menshevik who was brought into the new government as head of the Department of Labour, and Colonel A. A. Gal'kin, a 'twenty-six-year-old youth' (as one émigré historian described him), with no party affiliation.<sup>14</sup>

In June, the Committee had every reason to be optimistic. With the Czechoslovak Legion as its protector and the promise of significant Allied

<sup>13</sup> Dotsenko, P. *The Struggle for a Democracy in Siberia*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983 (hereafter *The Struggle for a Democracy*), p. 39.

<sup>14</sup> Zaitsov, *1918 God*, p. 169.



intervention, there was hope that a viable armed opposition to Soviet power could begin to take over the Volga region. The Volga was the heartland of the PSR, an area which had returned a high proportion of SR deputies to the Constituent Assembly elections in November 1918 and which could, it was hoped, provide a respectable Russian contingent to the anti-Bolshevik forces at the new government's disposal. In addition, the Red Army would hopefully be under serious pressure from North Russia as well as from the south and would therefore be too stretched to provide a sustained attack on the towns of the Volga. The WSC, which had moved to Omsk the day before Komuch issued its Order No. 1 and ended Soviet power in the area under its rule, was as minded as Komuch to place authority in the hands of zemstvos and with the Sibobduma dominated by SRs it in all likelihood appeared to the powers in Samara that they would soon be able to count upon the vast economic resources of Siberia and the Urals to bolster the war effort. Komuch, composed as it was almost exclusively by the PSR, was largely bound by the decision made at the Fourth Party Conference of December 1917 which forbade any coalition with the bourgeoisie. This, together with the optimism that came after the Czechoslovak revolt, is perhaps what made Komuch overly dogmatic in its attitude to power and authority in non-Bolshevik regions of the old Russian Empire. By the end of June, the WSC was replaced by the PSG and Siberian SRs seemed to be turning their back on the Komuch.<sup>15</sup> It was not, then, simply to be a matter of annexing Siberia through the PSR power base in the region. As the new capital was dominated by regionalists, bitter from their previous relationship with the party, the prospects for Komuch in Siberia looked poor by the beginning of July.

The Volga front continued to be dominated by the Czechoslovaks and as Komuch's new People's Army struggled to gain support from local peasants who were more concerned with maintaining their hold on land seized during the second half of 1917 and with improving their own well-being (and who were hostile to conscription), the long-term military situation looked 'downright menacing', as one recent study put it.<sup>16</sup> In early July, the military was reorganised, with Russian and Czechoslovak units being placed under a single, unified command. The Orenburg Cossacks, led by Ataman Dutov, seized Orenburg on 3 July and established good

<sup>15</sup> I. A. Iakushev, the SR chairman of the Sibobduma, supported the pronouncement issued by the PSG on 30 June. However, according to one recent study, this was only because Komuch was gaining little local support. See Pereira, *White Siberia*, p. 69.

<sup>16</sup> Petroff, *Remembering a Forgotten War*, p. 54.

relations with Komuch. Soon, Dutov was sending a regiment to Samara to augment the new army. However, the fact remained that 'the People's Army had only a meagre supply and no prospects for the production of more in the areas under its control'.<sup>17</sup> The army, despite an attempt to mobilise those born in 1897–1898, struggled to reach twenty thousand in number.<sup>18</sup> This mobilisation had the additional unfortunate effect of damaging relations between Komuch and the local peasantry, and it became clear to observers, if not to the Committee members themselves, that the Volga region ultimately required support from Siberia and the Urals, in terms of men as well as the supply of food and munitions, if it was to fight the Red Army, as little support seemed to be coming from the Allies.<sup>19</sup>

However, all this time Komuch focused on its rivalry with the PSG over the Urals and over who had the right to administer liberated territory in general. This was not simply due to anti-SR feeling in Omsk. Komuch antagonised local Kadets and the bourgeoisie by allowing the opening of a workers' soviet and adhering so strictly to the old Constituent Assembly.<sup>20</sup> The red flag of the Samara government was a stark contrast to the green and white of Siberia and it is clear that the differences between the two governments were essentially a battle between party and regionalist politics. Komuch told the PSG that it saw regionalism as a form of 'local patriotism' and formed close links with former members of the WSC in what one member of the PSG saw as 'an attempt to blow up the Siberian Government from within'.<sup>21</sup> This failure on the part of both governments to establish good relations resulted in a trade dispute which prevented the transportation of grain further west than Cheliabinsk, the westernmost major town within the PSG's jurisdiction, unless a surcharge was added. It also resulted in the refusal of Omsk to send troops to the Volga front at a time when the number of armed and mobilised members of Komuch's army did not exceed ten thousand.<sup>22</sup> The inability of the People's Army to expand and strengthen over July led Colonel Kappel to urge the UR's General Boldyrev (who needed little convincing)

<sup>17</sup> Petroff, *loc.cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Lebedev, V.I. *The Russian Democracy and its Struggle against the Bolsheviks* New York: Russian Information Bureau in the U. S., 1919, pp. 16–17.

<sup>19</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> Berk, 'Coup d'État of Admiral Kolchak', p. 300.

<sup>21</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, Vol. 1, p. 140.

<sup>22</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, pp. 100–101.



that political unity was vital. However, as S. P. Mel'gunov put it, 'The Samara government avoided this unity'.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Road to Cheliabinsk*

At the end of June and early in July 1918, delegates from the Moscow underground began to arrive at their destinations: and as Chaikovskii and his followers were rallying locals to their cause and making preparations for the landings in North Russia, other members of the UR began their work on the Volga. The Czechoslovak revolt had complicated their plans for an interior front to fight the twin foes of Bolshevism and Germany and, in a way, had rescued the anti-Bolshevik struggle which, as planned in Moscow, was dependant upon Allied incursions which had not materialised.<sup>24</sup> From July onwards, the UR was united with the Czechoslovaks in calling for an end to the hostility within the anti-Bolshevik camp and for the unification of all forces under one administration. This became the main and defining purpose of the Union of Regeneration. Developments in Siberia had complicated matters and with the success or otherwise of Chaikovskii's plans in the North undecided and the inability of Savinkov to hold onto Iaroslavl, the main body of UR members concentrated on securing a stable anti-Bolshevik stronghold from the Volga across the Urals and into western Siberia. Members of the UR were on hand just in time to participate in the first meeting between members of the two governments at Cheliabinsk.

Lev Krol, a Kadet deputy to the Constituent Assembly for Ekaterinburg and one of few liberal members of the UR, arrived in Samara on 11 July, to meet with French military attaché Major Guinet, who had recently arrived from Omsk. Guinet told Krol that the programme of the PSG was acceptable to the Allies and hoped it would be to Komuch also. Krol informed Guinet that, as Komuch was dominated by SRs, that was unlikely and that he wished to discuss the situation with fellow UR members Argunov and V. Pavlov, as their task was to unite the two governments and then to move on to Cheliabinsk to achieve their aim. Krol also met Klimushkin, who was keen to give Komuch a more cross-party appearance by including a Kadet (at this

<sup>23</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, pp. 103–104.

<sup>24</sup> Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p. 58, aptly describes the revolt as 'god's gift to the counter-revolution'.

point Komuch was only thirteen-to-fourteen strong), and invited Krol to join. This would not break the decree of the Fourth Party Conference, as no non-SRs were to participate in the governing process: Krol would merely have been a minor liberal augmentation, to give Komuch a more all-party appearance, and would not have been allowed to take a portfolio. This must have decreased his interest in joining. Krol and Klimushkin both decided not to reveal that the Kadet was ever in Samara, in order to avoid what would be seen as a public snub to Komuch. When, on the way to Cheliabinsk, Krol met with his fellow *Vozrozhdentsy*, Argunov and Pavlov revealed that they too had declined to enter the Samara Committee and were fearful that Krol would have joined. It became clear to Krol that Komuch saw itself as the embodiment of the Constituent Assembly, and, from his meetings with Guinet, Argunov and Pavlov, that there would be sharp differences in policy that would have to be resolved if there was to be any rapprochement between the two powers, let alone a unification.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, as Komuch was attempting to increase its numbers to include the newly arrived members of the UR (who, to their credit, remained circumspect), the mood in Omsk was hardening. On 9 July a conference of Cossacks called by Major (later Ataman) P. P. Ivanov-Rinov brought the military together with other members of the 'Omsk clique' – representatives of trade and industry and professional unions. Vologodskii presented a report of the work of the PSG, cementing relations further between the government and the forces of conservatism. The lines were drawn between Omsk and Samara and, with the UR attempting to remain aloof from the conflict, its members found themselves hovering somewhere in between the two governments, their own politics undecided. The UR's main task at this point was to attempt to find some common language that would give the two governments a unity of purpose and put an end to the conflict between them which was so damaging to the anti-Bolshevik struggle.

<sup>25</sup> Krol, L. *Za tri goda: Vospominaniia, vpechatleniia i vstrechi*. Vladivostok: Svobodnaia Rossiia, 1922 (hereafter *Za tri goda*), pp. 59–62. One early Soviet-era history has an interesting view on the decision made by Komuch to abide by the party decision not to enter a coalition. An early meeting of the Committee on the question of power is cited at which Vedeniapin said, 'The Union of Regeneration proposed to create power, based on a military dictatorship, for which it had in mind to assign a triumvirate with unlimited powers. Such a power would not at the present time meet with the support of the population.' Thus, in a move tantamount to 'SR Central Committee treachery' to the UR, the Moscow agreement of a Directory was substituted by the newly formed committee with the notion of a reconvened Constituent Assembly. Of course, no agreement was ever made between the UR and the Central Committee of the PSR. Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov' kapitalistami*, p. 324.



## *The First Cheliabinsk Conference*

Delegates began to arrive in Cheliabinsk a few days before the proposed date for the conference of 15 July. Argunov, Lev Krol and Pavlov arrived on 13 July and met with Bogdan Pavlu, the main representatives of the Czechoslovak National Council, who was as keen as the UR representatives on a positive outcome. As Grishin-Almazov, Mikhailov and Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. P. Golovachev arrived as the PSG delegation, good relations were established, with Krol the Kadet being greeted particularly warmly.<sup>26</sup> However, as soon as the Komuch delegation arrived, including Brushvit, Gal'kin and M. A. Vedeniapin, the convivial atmosphere soured. It seems that the two sides were interested merely in demonstrating the strength of their own positions and issuing demands. Siberia had the cushion of the Urals to hide behind, and the PSG was safe in the knowledge that the Czechoslovaks would fight to preserve the hold of the Samara government on the upper Volga before their own territory was remotely under threat. Komuch itself was still in the ascendant, despite its setbacks, and was still expanding its own territory. Every delegation present at Cheliabinsk, except for the UR, had its own flag to fly and the meeting of a relatively small number of men under the white and green of Siberia, the red flag of Komuch, as well as Guinet's French flag and Pavlu's Czech flag must have made for a rather absurd parade characterised by rather too much pomp and self-importance and too little willingness to compromise. Brushvit chose not to make use of the neutrals present as mediators and his delegation set out to meet with that of the PSG (Brushvit paving the way by sending a note to 'comrade Almazov'). Such behaviour was far from diplomatic and it is unsurprising that, as Krol later put it, their meeting soon 'blew up', Grishin-Almazov informing Brushvit that he was by no means the latter's 'comrade'.<sup>27</sup> The following day, the UR representatives and Major Guinet attempted to save the conference, Krol sending diplomatic notes to both sides. This prevented a complete rupture – as Krol put it, 'our neutral position inevitably gave us the confidence of both sides'. Although there was no meeting on 14 July, Guinet's invitation to meet at three o'clock the following day yielded results – neither delegation wanted to snub an Allied official.<sup>28</sup> The following afternoon, all were present in the carriage of the PSG delegation except the '*Samartsy*', who had decided

<sup>26</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 63.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 64.

they did not wish to 'go to the Siberians'. Krol eventually persuaded Brushvit and Vedeniapin to participate.

However, the meeting was conducted, in the words of Mel'gunov, 'coldly-officially'.<sup>29</sup> The Komuch delegation began by questioning the presence of the UR delegation, which was defended by all other delegates.<sup>30</sup> Brushvit then opened the conference with an address in which he stated that any all-Russian power must be derived from the Constituent Assembly and that, until its convocation, Komuch should take its duties, 'as democratically elected representatives of the Constituent Assembly'. This was countered by Mikhailov, who stated that the PSG was a regional government and recognised *no* all-Russian government formed without its consent.<sup>31</sup> These basic arguments were continued between the other members of the delegations, with Grishin-Almazov speaking of the autonomy of the Siberian Army whilst Gal'kin described the army's movement behind the Volga as 'aventura' (an adventure) at a time when both governments had 'a common enemy'. Golovachev impressed upon the conference that Siberia wanted its own foreign relations, while Brushvit maintained that the formation of an all-Russian government rendered such a statement of independence redundant. The whole meeting was characterised by petty squabbling over the pretensions to authority and officialdom on the part of both governments. For example, when Mikhailov addressed the 'Samara group of members of the Constituent Assembly', Brushvit corrected him and made clear the correct title of his government. Each group attempted to belittle the significance of the other and to assert the rights of their parent authority. Such inability to converse constructively culminated in the refusal of Mikhailov to discuss the construction of a future all-Russian government, saying that this would be 'premature'. Brushvit and Gal'kin attempted to complain about the behaviour of the PSG in relation to a number of regions between Samara and Omsk, such as Alash-Orda and the Bashkir region, but there was no agreement and the meeting closed.<sup>32</sup>

The delegates remained in Cheliabinsk and it was agreed to allow the Komuch and PSG representatives meet alone with only Pavlu present as a mediator. This meeting, on 16 July, resulted merely in the agreement to call a State Conference to

<sup>29</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 169. Mel'gunov was, in fact, referring to the behaviour of the Komuch delegation, which he attacks consistently for their intractability.

<sup>30</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 65.

<sup>31</sup> Hoover Institution, Nikolaevskiy Collection, Box 377, File 3, 'Komitet chlenov Vserrossiskogo uchreditel'nogo sobraniia i Sibirskoe vremennogo pravitel'stvo', pp. 1–6.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 9–13.



include representatives of all regional governments and any members of the Constituent Assembly who could be gathered in order to organise a central authority. According to Krol, 'In the view of the Union of Regeneration the mission of our delegation was a success for the first time: we had taken the first steps on the road to organising a central power.' However, to the outside observer, the conference had revealed much that was troublesome. The prickliness and pomposity of Komuch was most apparent and Krol had been initially more impressed by the attitude of the Omsk delegation, which had gained credit from a few simple points: the powers in Omsk had no desire to interfere in the business of European Russia, so why should Siberia be run from west of the Urals? In addition, why should Siberia be stripped of resources to 'pay for all Russia'? Such regionalist concerns were acknowledged by Krol, a proud 'Urals man'. However, in meetings with the political leaders of Ekaterinburg, who had gone to Cheliabinsk, Krol was informed of the methods of government of the PSG, 'of the bringing together of civil and military power', and he became convinced of the need for an independent Urals government, separate from Omsk and Samara.<sup>33</sup> A recent study has also suggested that Krol may also have been under the influence of French Major Alphonse Guinet in forming this decision.<sup>34</sup> This government was created over the next two weeks, although it never succeeded in gaining the recognition of either Komuch or the PSG.

The first Cheliabinsk conference was seen by the UR as a success. It paved the way for the creation of a new all-Russian government, via a conference to be organised by Argunov. This conference would roughly be along the lines of the plans made by the UR and the National Centre in Moscow in the spring. Although the majority of the members of the Kadet-based organisation were in South Russia, the UR had no reason to doubt that the leading figure in the organisation, Astrov, would sanction the new authority and would perhaps join it, providing an important bourgeois-liberal dimension. But were either of the two conflicting powers based at Omsk and Samara really willing to submit to this new government and hand over their authority? Ultimately, this was a meeting between two opposing powers that decided nothing more than to meet again on a grander scale. The calling of a state conference

<sup>33</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p.66.

<sup>34</sup> Pleshkevich, E. A. 'Vremmenoe oblastnoe pravitel'stvo urala: diskussii o prichinakh obrazovaniia', *Otechestvennaia istoriia* No. 5 (Sept–Oct 2003) (hereafter 'Vremmenoe oblastnoe pravitel'stvo urala'), p. 32. Pleshkevich's claim that Krol met with Guinet at Cheliabinsk is, unfortunately, not well sourced, which casts some doubt on his theory concerning the formation of the Urals' government. See below, p. 118, for a discussion of this theory.



with representatives of all regional governments would take time – time both governments hoped would allow them to strengthen their position in their own regions. Therefore, as the delegates left Cheliabinsk, Komuch continued to concentrate on which towns to attack and take from the Bolsheviks, while the PSG focused on another power struggle somewhat closer to home.

### *Omsk, Tomsk and the Struggle for Siberia*

The Cheliabinsk Conference may be seen as a step forward in the bringing together of Samara and Omsk under a single anti-Bolshevik government, but it occurred as conflict was increasing over the rights of the PSG vis-à-vis the Sibobduma inside Siberia. During July and August 1918 the government introduced a number of right-wing measures designed essentially to undo the legacy of the revolution of February 1917. Industry was denationalised, the state bread monopoly was ended, and the return of all property seized by peasants to the landowners was ordered. These measures pandered to the conservative elites upon which the PSG depended, and the government combated the subsequent unrest in the countryside by reintroducing the death-penalty and the system of 'field courts' used in tsarist Russia.<sup>35</sup> The Sibobduma itself wanted to be allowed to reconvene as the supreme organ of power and wished the seat of government to be moved to the more established (and more democratic) regionalist centre of Tomsk, although on 4 July the PSG made it clear that this was not going to happen.<sup>36</sup> As the Omsk government passed more and more conservative legislation, the desire of the дума to intervene understandably increased, particularly as a measure was taken early in July to allow propertied elements to be represented in the дума.<sup>37</sup> This was clearly not only an attempt to endear the government to the bourgeoisie but was also an attack on the pretensions of the Sibobduma to bringing the government to accountability. The SR-dominated legislature had natural allegiances to the Constituent Assembly and this rivalry between Omsk and Tomsk can be seen as an extension of that between Omsk and Samara. Just as Komuch attempted to put forward its view that any authority in Russia came from the Constituent Assembly, speeches by Vologodskii to the effect

<sup>35</sup> Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> Vegman 'Sibolduma [sic]', pp. 94–5.

<sup>37</sup> Dotsenko, *The Struggle for a Democracy*, p. 44; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, p. 32.



that the PSG 'sprang from the heart of the дума' but that due to the restricted franchise under which the дума was elected, the PSG was in fact the only institution supported by all classes.<sup>38</sup> This again can be seen as an attack on not only the Sibobduma, but also on any body elected during the 'distorted' revolutionary period. This, of course, included the Constituent Assembly. Much of Siberia was divided over the issue of power and authority in the region. One force that may have given support to the дума was the co-operative movement, but the movement was divided in its loyalties as well as its attitude to policy.

The right-wing course pursued by the PSG inspired the more democratically-minded Siberians, such as A. V. Sazonov (the Chairman of the All-Siberian Co-operative Bureau) and V. V. Kulikov (the Chairman of the Congress of the Western Siberian Union) as well as representatives of the butter producers' co-operative, the largest producers' co-operative, to join the UR and begin to publish the Omsk-based paper, *Zaria*. However, relations between these men and the PSR were as strained as the party's ties with the regionalists, and this prevented the Sibobduma from boosting its support in Omsk, as support for the дума went hand in hand with support for SR dogma and the rights of the Constituent Assembly. One right-SR, M. Krol, reported that, as the PSG prepared to meet delegates from Komuch for the first time, all talk in Omsk was of dictatorship.<sup>39</sup> *Zaria* itself soon became the voice for hard-line Siberian regionalism, and the Omsk-based members of the UR had little in common with the rest of the Moscow-born group and shared few of their goals, being more concerned with the governance of Siberia than with the war against the Bolshevik-German enemy. Therefore, many early members of the Omsk branch of the UR were in fact supporters of the PSG.<sup>40</sup> The division between the co-operatives was along producer-purchaser lines. The buyers' co-operative, *Zakupsbyt*, the former patrons of the WSC, supported the дума and the PSR, as it favoured regulation. Producers' co-operatives naturally favoured free trade and were impressed by the measures taken by the PSG to reverse the legislation made in 1917 that had imposed regulations on prices. It is too

<sup>38</sup> Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, pp. 158-159.

<sup>40</sup> An example of the confusion over the role of the UR can be found in Pereira, *White Siberia*, p. 79. Kulikov is cited as a member of the Omsk branch of the UR (the URR in Pereira's book) who called for the dismissal of the дума and the establishment of a dictatorship. But Kulikov's aims are clearly contrary to those of the leadership of the UR and for this reason he cannot realistically be considered to have been a member. No evidence has been found to suggest any of this Omsk-based group ever met or corresponded with the main body of the union.

simplistic to say that the divergent views of the co-operatives 'cancelled each other out', as one recent study claims.<sup>41</sup> Rather, they bolstered the support both of Omsk and the Sibobduma and broadened the confrontation from a straightforward power struggle into a more general split based on differing political views and economic aspirations. In practical terms, the conflict between Omsk and Tomsk was built-up by this division, as well as by the escalating rivalry between the PSG and Komuch, and the two conflicts should not be seen as discrete from one another. The battle between the PSG and the duma was inextricably linked with the determination of Omsk not to be answerable to the Constituent Assembly. Negotiations over the meeting of the Duma continued throughout July, the PSG successfully stalling the opening until 15 August.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Urals Oblast Government*

A short trip from Cheliabinsk to Omsk convinced Lev Krol of the necessity of a separate authority based in Ekaterinburg to administer the Urals. He had initially discussed this with fellow UR members Argunov and Pavlov at Cheliabinsk, where it was seen that Ekaterinburg could be developed into an alternative seat of all-Russian power.<sup>43</sup> It has recently been suggested that Krol had also met with the French Major Guinet at the conference and that it was Guinet who had persuaded Krol that a separate government for the Urals be formed, as a part of an Allied strategy to use the Czechoslovak Legion as an occupying force and exploit the region's natural resources, preventing access to them by what the Allies saw as reactionary forces in control of Siberia. However, the fact that Krol never mentioned any such suggestion being made by Guinet, despite his detailed recounting of his time in Cheliabinsk, throws some doubt over this assertion. There is little doubt that Guinet worked hard at brokering a compromise between the PSG and Komuch at the conference, and that the Frenchman was a significant ally of the UR at this time. The suggestion, though, that Krol was little more than a French stooge does not explain his subsequent actions, which are a clear indication both of the fact that Krol wanted to make a deal with the

<sup>41</sup> Petroff, *Remembering a Forgotten War*, p. 70.

<sup>42</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, p. 150.

<sup>43</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 65.



Siberians in the latter half of July and that it was his experience with the representatives of the PSG that hardened his attitude to it.<sup>44</sup>

In Omsk, Krol met with local Kadets, including their leader, V. A. Zhardetskii, who was 'very unstable', having recently been freed from a Bolshevik prison and who was strongly in favour of a dictatorship. Zhardetskii, a lawyer and editor of the Omsk-based *Sibirskaiia rech*, blamed the PSR for the *débâcle* of 1917 and the coming to power of the Bolsheviks and his experience at the hands of the latter appear to have turned him into something of a fanatic, who saw the salvation of Russia only in a military dictator. His hostility to the UR tempered when he heard of Argunov, Pavlov and Krol's plan to open an Omsk department and Zhardetskii said he would help gather members and might even join the organisation himself. However, the Omsk department which he joined was simply used to put forward some of Zhardetskii's own political ideas. A letter to *Zaria* of 8 August on the behalf of the Omsk branch and authored by the Kadet leader made it clear that the calling of the old Constituent Assembly was 'impossible' – something which the UR had not formally agreed. Zhardetskii also used this platform to expound the virtues of non-recognition of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, of which he was having difficulty in persuading Vologodskii.<sup>45</sup> At a Trade and Industry Conference at the end of July, Krol saw that there was little support for democracy in Omsk, and after witnessing a speech by Patushinskii (one of the PSG's only democratically-minded ministers), Krol became aware of a 'deep provincialism' in the Siberian capital. Krol's 'tortuous' journey back to Ekaterinburg then provided him with the opportunity to view the way in which the PSG administered its territory. It was at this time that Krol decided that 'the Siberian government worked along Bolshevik methods'.<sup>46</sup>

On his return to the capital of the Urals, Krol participated in a six-day-long series of meetings, between 1 and 7 August, to establish a coalition government with a

<sup>44</sup> Pleshkevich, 'Vremmenoe oblastnoe pravitel'stvo urala', pp. 30–32. Pleshkevich fails to refer to any specific sources supporting his claim that Guinet approached Krol on this matter. Moreover, the wider implications for French policy in the region are not addressed, in particular the fact that holding the Czechoslovak Legion in the Urals was counter to the well-established French aim to expedite the Legion from Russia.

<sup>45</sup> Hoover Institution, Ostroukhov Collection, 'Omskii otdel' soiuza vozrozhdeniia Rossii'. This is a letter to *Zaria* from the Omsk branch of the UR, dated 8 August 1918; Lyandres and Wulff (eds), *A Chronicle of the Civil War*, p. 101 (diary entry for 3 August).

<sup>46</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 67–69. This view of PSG extremism as another kind of Bolshevism is echoed in the title of Argunov's memoir, *Mezhdv dvumia bol'shevizmami*. The phrase was also used by Vologodskii after the Omsk coup to describe rightist elements in the army, which he said Kolchak would be able to moderate. See Collins, D. and Smele, J. *Kolchak i Sibir': Dokumenty i issledovaniia, 1919–1926*. Vol. 1. White Plains, NY: Kraus, 1988, p. xvi.



similar anti-Bolshevik and anti-German programme to that of the UR, combining notions of free trade and private property with state ownership and regulation where in the state interest. The government was to be an interim authority, again in the spirit of the UR, ahead of the calling of a constituent assembly.<sup>47</sup> The most significant members were Krol and fellow local Kadet P. V. Ivanov, who was chosen to be Chairman, with local SR A. V. Pribylev acting as the 'main representative of the left wing'.<sup>48</sup> Other members were P. V. Murashev (a Menshevik), N. Aseiki (a Popular Socialist) and two non-party men – a composition which, again, reflected the influence of Krol, who was clearly acting not only as a local political activist but as a member of the UR, creating a government that would be nothing but friendly to the aims of the Union in bringing the moderate left and the moderate right together. Despite the reservations of the newly-formed Ekaterinburg government concerning the PSG, good relations between the two were quickly established. In fact, the Urals government was the subject of a diplomatic bidding war between Komuch and the PSG which the latter won due to Komuch's demands for unconditional submission to its authority, whereas Grishin-Almazov promised a degree of autonomy.

Possibly, as PSG secretary G. K. Guins claimed, it was as a result of this failure at Ekaterinburg that Komuch began to develop its relations with Socialist Revolutionary former members of the WSC in order to increase its popularity in Siberia and to attempt to 'blow up the Siberian government from within'.<sup>49</sup> This involvement of Komuch in the internal affairs of Siberia and its alignment with former WSC members was another factor increasing the temperature of the struggle between the PSG and the Sibobduma. In addition, the negotiations do not seem to have been conducted in particularly good faith, and it appears that the agenda of Grishin-Almazov was to win Krol over with promises and worry about the delivery of those promises later, perhaps in the hope that Komuch would shoot itself in the foot by being over-bearing in its demands of the government. This, indeed, was the case, as the Committee was later openly hostile to the new government. Grishin-Almazov

<sup>47</sup> Mel'gunov describes the Urals government as 'fully corresponding to the spirit of the "Union of Regeneration"', and an 'artificially born new pretender'. *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. II, p. 171.

<sup>48</sup> Hoover Institution, Anichkov Collection, 'Revoliutsiia' Vol. III, 'Ekaterinburg: Obrazovanie Samostoiatel'nago Ural'skago Pravitel'stva', pp. 1–3. This is part of a lengthy series of memoirs by the former head of the Volga based *Kama* Bank, an earlier, translated part of which deals with his looking after the Royal Family in Ekaterinburg and is an excellent account of their last days. See also Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> Guins, *Sibir'*, p. 140.



had promised the Urals government autonomy under the sovereignty of Omsk, but having made a verbal agreement, he departed for his capital without committing anything to paper. A few days later, Krol attempted to pin Vologodskii down on this matter, but received only the promise that Omsk would appoint a new government of the Urals. Krol was furious and broke the agreement. In an attempt to force Omsk to take the government more seriously, he (along with Argunov, Pavlov and E. K. Bresho-Breshkovskaia) met with Major Guinet and British Consul Thomas Preston to gain Allied approval for his government. This was successful and soon Mikhailov was sent to Ekaterinburg to make a more solid agreement. The 'young minister' (he refused to divulge his age to Krol), after lengthy negotiations, promised certain concessions (such as joint control over the railways), provided that Omsk would be granted control of certain uezds.<sup>50</sup>

### *The Sibobduma Opens*

The PSG had successfully outplayed Komuch over the emergence of the Urals government, but had other matters on its mind. Komuch had the backing of the Czechoslovaks, and with much of the Legion in Siberia, there must have been considerable fear that this might not only help the Samara delegation at Cheliabinsk, but also strengthen the hand of the Sibobduma.

➤ With the second Cheliabinsk conference a week away and the government very keen to avoid separate representation being made to the conference by the executive and the legislature, the дума opened on 15 August at Tomsk University Library.<sup>51</sup> After a typically grand opening ceremony, the division between the SR–Menshevik majority (forty-six of the ninety-seven delegates were SRs, a further eight were Mensheviks) and the regionalists became clear. Vologodskii read out a PSG resolution claiming that the government was a sovereign body, with support from all sectors of society. He warned the left not to be too aggressive if they wished to avoid right-wing reaction – a thinly veiled threat from a man whose power derived largely from his military cronies. Regionalist deputies were not afraid of pointing out that they now saw the дума as a 'rubber-stamp' and nothing more. The SRs, who claimed that the PSG

<sup>50</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 78.

<sup>51</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, p. 155.

council derived its authority from the Sibobduma (and was, therefore, responsible to it) called for an important role in government to be played by the old Constituent Assembly. The SR fraction also claimed that the forthcoming state conference should not merely be composed of representatives of regional governments, but also members of the Constituent Assembly, the many nationalities that composed the population of the liberated territories, and political parties. Grishin-Almazov, in response, made a speech calling for a military dictatorship which caused consternation among the SR deputies. In sum, the opening session of the Sibobduma was little more than a demonstration of contradictory positions, and little was achieved save for the agreement to meet again in a month with an expanded membership to include representatives of propertied elements as well as any Siberian Constituent Assembly member who could attend. One agreement was made, in that a delegation was elected to send greetings to the second Cheliabinsk Conference. The session was closed rather suddenly on 20 August, with what Guins described as an 'amusing' story, when massing right-wing forces in Omsk necessitated the exit of Vologodskii and Grishin-Almazov.<sup>52</sup> The struggle in Siberia would continue after the PSG delegation, which included Mikhailov, returned from Cheliabinsk.

At the same time as the opening session of the Sibobduma, the Siberian government was conducting its first meetings with the people who would be running the Cheliabinsk Conference, as Avksent'ev, Argunov and Breshko-Breshovskaia arrived in Siberia. After discussing the situation with other oblastniks (including the veteran Potanin), Guins met with Avksent'ev. True to form, the UR leader attempted to ingratiate himself with the Siberian minister and said that he wanted to form not a party coalition, but a coalition along 'business' lines. On the issue of responsibility before the Constituent Assembly, he stated that a thirty or even 150-strong group, consisting almost exclusively of SRs, would be 'politically bankrupt' as a law-making body because a functioning coalition could not operate under the control of one party, that no 'all-national' power could be created and that under such circumstances nobody would enter a coalition government. Avksent'ev also made it clear that thirty to fifty members, as the Samara committee stood at that time, would not be considered by the masses to be representative of their will. Speaking of the PSG, the UR leader said he found the government 'stately, deeply consistent and correctly

<sup>52</sup> Vegman, 'Sibolduma [sic]', pp.97–106; Guins *Sibir*, pp. 165–179; Berk, '*Coup d'État* of Admiral Kolchak', pp. 250–262; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 32–33.



selected'. The PSG had, he said, been loyal to all-Russian goals. It is not clear if Avksent'ev's obsequiousness gave Guins a more favourable view of the upcoming conference, but it does appear that he was at least relieved to be dealing with SRs that were 'non-Chernovite'.<sup>53</sup> Avksent'ev's words also spoke volumes of the desire of the UR to placate the PSG, even if that meant making promises regarding the Constituent Assembly that would be difficult to sell to Komuch.

### *The Second Cheliabinsk Conference*

As with the previous conference, delegates arrived early. Several members of the UR had arrived by 20 August, the day the Sibobduma closed (including Avksent'ev, Argunov, Pavlov, Moiseenko and Kadet Central Committee member, V. N. Pepeliaev). Krol, a more moderate Kadet, knew little of Pepeliaev, a man of the 'ultra right-wing' of the party who had, as a Provisional Government Commissar of the Kronstadt fortress, been arrested by radical sailors and imprisoned for two weeks in a ship's casemate compartment (to which Krol attributed his bitter anti-revolutionary stance and his 'disdain for the masses'). Pepeliaev appears to have been a rather untypical – even odd – member of the UR, although it is clear from his behaviour at breakfast on 20 August with his UR brethren that he was a UR affiliate on paper alone. Pepeliaev publicly made it clear he saw little difference between Komuch and any other socialists, including those before him, and did not conceal his enmity to the lot of them. He told Krol that he had been sent by the Kadet Party Central Committee to follow Krol with the instruction that the party had decided that the way forward was a dictatorship.<sup>54</sup> Pepeliaev's mission, as member of the Kadet Party and as a member of the National Centre, is of some interest here and is worth dwelling on, as the importance of his role in the tumultuous events in Siberia in the autumn cannot be denied.<sup>55</sup>

The political directions of the two Kadets, Krol and Pepeliaev, were far apart indeed. Krol never made any attempt to forge an alliance with his fellow party man to push for a dictatorship. Having heard of the wishes of his party leaders (now based

<sup>53</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, pp. 162–163.

<sup>54</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 80–81. Pepeliaev was in all likelihood influenced by the prevailing mood of the Kadet Party Conference of 27–29 May. See above, p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> Pepeliaev's role as 'kingmaker' in Siberia is discussed persuasively in Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 56–62.

largely at Ekaterinodar), it would surely have been logical to raise the issue at the Cheliabinsk Conference where the delegates from the Siberian Government might have been of help. This did not happen. Pepeliaev's direction at this point indicates that those National Centre members who had departed for the Don had shifted to the right over the summer, possibly due to their proximity to the Volunteer Army. The Kadet Party was so diffuse as to be impossible to characterise in general. However, with Pepeliaev, a Central Committee member, on the scene, and Zhardetskii in charge of the Omsk Kadets, Krol was somewhat isolated as a left-Kadet in Siberia at this time and it would be wrong to assume that Krol's presence and involvement in giving impetus to the UR's plans meant that the union's actions had the tacit approval of the National Centre.<sup>56</sup> During the conferences and after the unification of power, the UR would not merely be acting as a bridge between Komuch and the PSG, but between the Kadet Party and the PSR, two bodies so different in orientation and aspirations by mid-1918 that forming a government would be an achievement in itself, and an important step forward. Gaining political support for that government would be another matter entirely.

At Cheliabinsk, the Komuch delegation of Vol'skii, Rogovskii, Vedeniapin and Nesterov arrived in a mood of optimism. Between 5 and 7 August Kazan had been taken by units of the People's Army dominated by Czechoslovaks, the Imperial gold reserve was seized and transported to Samara, and for the first (and only) time, the road to Moscow was opened for the democratic anti-Bolshevik forces. However, despite the 'delirium' (as one recent account described it) in Samara, it is fair to view this in retrospect as a Pyrrhic victory.<sup>57</sup> Lebedev, Komuch's young commander, was confident that the army could be in Moscow within two months.<sup>58</sup> But this was, of course, insanely optimistic and was surely only possible if the march to Moscow was effected as quickly as the progress of the Czechoslovaks had been throughout western Siberia and the Volga. Lebedev must have been hoping that the Red Army would put up no resistance at all. The People's Army was now spread very thinly across the Volga front, with several important towns to defend (including the recently liberated Simbirsk). The newly captured territory, in general, required considerable manpower

<sup>56</sup> On the complexities of the relationship between different members of the Kadet Party and the party and other political groups at this time, see Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, pp. 170–172; and Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, pp. 389–391.

<sup>57</sup> Petroff, *Remembering a Forgotten War*, p. 80.

<sup>58</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 112.



to guard it and yielded comparatively little in the way of new recruits. Simbirsk, for example, provided the People's Army with just two battalions. Matters were not helped by the inactivity of the Siberian Army or the drain of officers from Samara to the Omsk, where the greater influence given to the military and the lack of political commissars attached to the army must have been an attraction. The officers of the People's Army, tired from constant combat, were putting pressure on their government to unify with the Siberians, whose reactionary tendencies were understandably far less distasteful to the Komuch army than to its government.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, when Vol'skii, Rogovskii, Vedeniapin and Nesterov arrived at the conference, their government was at the high point of its fortunes and the delegation assured its fellow members in Samara that it would insist any future government should be responsible to the old Constituent Assembly and would take as its first step the creation of a united, federal Russia.<sup>60</sup> After the Conference of around fifty delegates opened on 22 August with a speech by Avksent'ev, the first session proper began the following day at 10.00 a.m. with an opening address by Breshko-Breshkovskaia, the symbolic 'grandmother of the revolution', who had been similarly used by Kerensky in 1917.<sup>61</sup> Argunov, who had hoped to organise a full state conference by this time, was disappointed. In particular, the conference was short on delegates from within European Russia, and consequently Cheliabinsk was to be merely another preliminary conference.<sup>62</sup> An organisational bureau was elected, comprising Avksent'ev (Chairman), Mikhailov and E. Rogovskii (vice-Chairmen) and V. N. Moiseenko and P.V. Murashev (secretaries). This was unanimously approved. After the presidium confirmed the order of business – the composition of the proposed state conference, its place of meeting and the date of its opening – the conference decided to pass on all decision-making to a smaller committee. Vol'skii voiced the insistence of Komuch that the Urals government should have no place on

<sup>59</sup> Petroff, *Remembering a Forgotten War*, p. 64, pp. 84–89.

<sup>60</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 5, l.21. Fond 144 is a collection of items relating to the Ufa State Conference and related subjects, including the Second Cheliabinsk Conference. The citation here is of an undated letter from the Komuch delegation at the second Cheliabinsk conference to Samara.

<sup>61</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 4, pp. 50–51; d.5, ll. 91. These two *dela* are papers relating to the Second Cheliabinsk Conference, including brief minutes of proceedings. The Conference included representatives of Komuch, the PSG, the Sibobduma, the Urals *oblast* Government, the Orenburg Cossacks, and the Central Committees of the PSR, the Mensheviks and the *Edinstvo* group of defencist Mensheviks, the Popular Socialists, and the Kadet party, as well as representatives of the Allies.

<sup>62</sup> Argunov, *Mezhdumia bol'shevizmami*, p. 15.



the commission and thus that government was not represented. The commission was chaired by the Popular Socialist F. Z. Chembulov, with Pepeliaev as vice-Chairman.

Initial discussion was over the composition of the state conference and who would have the right to representation. In particular, the representation of governments of the Urals, the Bashkirs, Alash-Orda and Estonia were of issue, as were the Siberian and Orenburg Cossack hosts. There was much talk of 'real forces' and, naturally, the Komuch delegates were opposed to the inclusion of the Urals, who were more friendly to the PSG, whilst Mikhailov expressed the opinion that the Bashkir and Alash-Orda governments, who had Komuch patronage, should not be permitted seats at the conference.<sup>63</sup> The following day (24 August) the venue of the conference was discussed. Komuch had the support of the SR, Popular Socialist and Menshevik delegations as well as that of the Congress of Zemstvos and Towns in suggesting Samara. Cheliabinsk, the preferred venue of the PSG, had the backing of the Kadet delegation as well as those of the Urals government, the Cossacks and representatives of *Edinstvo*.

At no session at the conference was compromise reached over any of the issues. The discussions frequently descended into arguments over, for example, the rights of various groups and governments to send delegations. Pepeliaev, in particular, showed little desire to facilitate the smooth running of the conference. At one point, he became involved in a vicious argument with Avksent'ev which brought the UR leader to his feet to shout 'Comrade Pepeliaev, for God's sake calm down!'; to which Pepeliaev replied, 'I am no comrade to you – do not forget that!' This caused Maiskii, there with the Komuch delegation, to turn to the Kadet representatives and shout, 'Yes, you are no comrades to us, get out of here!' <sup>64</sup> Given this rather unfriendly atmosphere, it is unsurprising that little was achieved at the main sessions of the conference.

On the morning of 25 August, at a pared-down meeting of Avksent'ev, Vol'skii, Mikhailov, Nesterov, Vedeniapin and Rogovskii, the compromise location of Ufa was mooted. A vote later that day of nineteen delegations revealed that Cheliabinsk had emerged the preferred venue by ten votes to nine; however, Mikhailov had by this time agreed to Ufa. The date was set for 1 September. A report later that day by Chembulov revealed that the commission had found it impossible to

<sup>63</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 84–85.

<sup>64</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 199.



decide on which delegations should go to Ufa and how large each should be, which boded ill for the success of the state conference. It was therefore decided that all disputed groups should be allowed to attend (which delighted the Allied representatives, who had hoped for as broad an agreement as possible) and, on the suggestion of Ivan Maiskii, the size of each delegation was capped at three. Thus, in a three-day conference in which debates had worn on without much achievement, the major decisions were made in a matter of minutes. Following a report by Pavlu, which highlighted the exhaustion of the Czechoslovaks and urged the formation of a unified government as quickly as possible, the conference closed.<sup>65</sup>

The outcome of the conference appears to have been positive, particularly when contrasted with the first meeting in July. The PSG delegation, led by the most difficult member, Mikhailov, had not only agreed on a venue outside of Siberia, but the two sides had agreed on the delegations to be present without much acrimony or posturing. The reasons for the UR's success, if it is to be judged as such, are not difficult to work out in retrospect. Komuch clearly hoped that its military success would continue and that by the time of the state conference it would be in an even stronger bargaining position. Mikhailov had had problems with Samara's interference in the struggle between the PSG and the Sibobduma, and did not wish to antagonise the *Samartsy* further. Thus, the agreement made at Cheliabinsk gave the PSG a breathing space. Mikhailov must also have been delighted by the report made by Pavlu, which seemed to indicate that there was a time-limit on the Czechoslovak involvement in the civil war. A visit by his fellow delegate, Grishin-Almazov, to Krol, at which he asked Krol if the Urals were 'against the Czechs', revealed that the PSG was concerned about the presence of the Legion in Siberia, as the Czechoslovak National Council was clearly in support of Komuch.<sup>66</sup> Time would only place Komuch under more pressure, whereas it provided Mikhailov with the opportunity to strengthen his own position, centralise power further in Siberia and continue the rightward march of July. The conference had begun with two sides holding seemingly intractable positions. The addition of other regional delegations at the future conference could sway the decision making one way or the other, as could the relative strength of the positions of Omsk and Samara. The Ufa State Conference would either be a contest between the two governments, or a compromise of sorts would be forced

<sup>65</sup> GARF, f. 144, d. 5, ll. 94–104. Minutes of the Second Cheliabinsk Conference.

<sup>66</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 82.

by those outside of both. During the time leading up to the conference, the position of both governments would come under attack.

### *The State Conference Eclipsed: the Second Omsk Coup d'État*

The UR certainly had reason to be optimistic at the end of the Second Cheliabinsk conference. It had succeeded in bringing together the PSG and Komuch under one roof without major disagreements and could now look forward to a state conference at which a new government would hopefully be created according to its plans. In addition, it was possible that by the opening of the conference the UR would have the presence of such heavyweights as Chaikovskii and General Alekseev to help in the forming of a government which would keep its agreements with the National Centre and thereby gain broad political and military backing.

However, developments in Siberia and Russia over the month after the second Cheliabinsk Conference had massive repercussions for the planned state conference. As soon as Mikhailov and Grishin-Almazov returned from Omsk, the political scene in the capital was turned upside down. On 24 August, the government acted to strengthen its power and ensure that the Sibobduma could not act to change its membership, by creating an Administrative Council. This 'business cabinet', made up of officials attached to PSG ministries, was in theory a way of broadening out the decision-making process and including different points of view from that of the six-man government. In fact, it was packed with advisors who were close to Mikhailov.<sup>67</sup> The formation of the Administrative Council was worked out by Guins, and presented to Vologodskii as a way of lightening the burden of the larger Council of Ministers.<sup>68</sup> The formation of the Administrative Council also coincided with Vologodskii (who was already frequently absent from the capital on vacation) being 'invited' by Serebrennikov to visit the Far East in an attempt to smooth over relations with Derber's PGAS and with General Horvath's Far Eastern Committee. The PSG leader had long been concerned with the security of the government in the east, and as the Omsk government was about to take on powers to its west, the time was ripe to ensure

<sup>67</sup> Guins *Sibir*, pp. 185–186; Vladimirova, *God sluzhby 'sotsialistov'*, pp. 357–359; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 40–41.

<sup>68</sup> Lyandres and Wulff (eds), *A Chronicle of the Civil War*, p. 122 (diary entry for 7 September).



that it would not be surrounded by hostility.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, it became clear in Omsk that Grishin-Almazov had disgraced himself and the PSG in front of the Allies at a banquet in Cheliabinsk. The heavily inebriated commander had taken exception to the words of British Consul Preston and had launched a tirade against the Allies and the Czechoslovaks to the effect that they needed Russia, and a resurgent Russian army, more than they were needed by Russia.<sup>70</sup>

Someone in Omsk – it may have been more than one person – felt threatened by Grishin-Almazov and chose to make political capital out of this incident. The military leadership were perhaps unhappy with the commander's moderate disciplinary methods. Other ministers in Omsk, in particular Mikhailov, may have seen him as a threat to their own ambitions. Others may have viewed his presence in the PSG as an unwelcome link between civil and military authority – Guins, for example, claims that Patushinskii hated the military leader.<sup>71</sup> Whatever intrigue was going on in Omsk, Vologodskii was himself determined to remove Grishin-Almazov – apart from this scandal, Vologodskii was suspicious that his commander-in-chief was in communication with Horvath and planned to arrest the PSG.<sup>72</sup> The dismissal took place on 4 September. Mikhailov and Serebrennikov both threatened to resign if Grishin-Almazov was not reinstated, but Vologodskii persuaded both to stay. On hearing this, Patushinskii decided to leave the government.<sup>73</sup> It is not clear whether Mikhailov's threat to resign was real or whether he was attempting to distance himself from the intrigue. The master of conspiracy certainly never gave Vologodskii, who was on the constant lookout for enemies, cause to view him as a potential traitor, despite the fact that he benefited most from the creation of the Administrative Council and the dismissals. The removal of Grishin-Almazov and Patushinskii, together with the departure of Vologodskii for the Far East (along with that of Krutovskii and Shatilov for Tomsk and of Serebrennikov and Sapozhnikov for Ufa) left all executive and legislative power to the Administrative Council, including the right to close

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114 (diary entry for 31 August).

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 117 (diary entry for 4 September).

<sup>71</sup> For different views of the dismissal of Grishin-Almazov, see Guins, *Sibir*, pp. 194–198; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 40–41; Rupp, S. 'A House Divided: Civil War Politics in Siberia, 1918', in McDermott, K. and Morrison, J. (eds) *Politics and Society Under the Bolsheviks*. London: Macmillan, 1999 (hereafter 'A House Divided'), p. 69.

<sup>72</sup> Lyandres and Wulff (eds), *A Chronicle of the Civil War*, pp. 114–122 (diary entries for 31 August–7 September).

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 119–123 (diary entries for 5–8 September).



sessions of the Sibobduma.<sup>74</sup> Thus, on the day of the opening of the State Conference in Ufa, the entire machinery of the fervently regionalist PSG was placed in the hands of Mikhailov, who himself was not even a Siberian. This was an irony which went unnoticed. This inner-governmental conspiring also precipitated a bloody confrontation between the PSG and the Sibobduma which was to eclipse the state conference.

The Sibobduma opened in Tomsk, as planned, on 10 September. Included in sessions were Shatilov, Krutovskii and Patushinskii, the SR-oblastnik members of the PSG who had been manoeuvred out of position by Mikhailov and his 'Omsk clique'. The дума, on 18 September' discussed taking measures against the 'unlawful' PSG, whose position at the early meetings of the Ufa State Conference was considered to be 'intransigent'. In a closed session, the дума then also decided to send representatives to Omsk to force changes in the Administrative Council and create a 'left majority' in the government. This was effected on 19 September by returning Shatilov and Krutovskii to their posts, together with Patushinskii (who rescinded his resignation). This was sufficient to create a quorum in the Administrative Council, which then voted an additional seat in government to the SR Aleksandr Novoselov, himself a member of the PGAS.<sup>75</sup> In theory, although this government never met in full, the SR-oblastniks now had a majority and they talked of sending a new delegation to Ufa. Krutovskii attempted to arrange a meeting of the 'government' with Mikhailov, but the latter succeeded in avoiding meeting them for two days before Commandant Volkov arrested Shatilov, Krutovskii and Novoselov.<sup>76</sup> The three were forced to sign a paper resigning their ministerial posts. Krutovskii and Shatilov signed, but Novoselov refused and was 'hacked to death' in a small copse outside of the town.<sup>77</sup> Whether the army were ordered to go this far is a matter for debate, but they were clearly acting in Mikhailov's interest (if not on his orders) and no charge was ever made against Novoselov's killers, despite the fact that Argunov was later entrusted with the special task of investigating this horrific act of political violence. Mikhailov made full use of the upheaval and ordered the closing of the Sibobduma. However, its chairman (I. A. Iakushev) refused, accused Mikhailov of plotting a coup against the

<sup>74</sup> Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, p. 40.

<sup>75</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, pp. 183–184; Guins *Sibir'*, p. 220.

<sup>76</sup> Guins, *Sibir'*, p. 221; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, p. 42.

<sup>77</sup> Dotsenko, *The Struggle for a Democracy*, p. 46; Boldyrev, V. G. *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy: Vospominaniia*. Novosibirsk: Sibkraiizdat, 1925 (hereafter *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*), pp. 517–518.



duma, and formed a Tomsk-based authority, the 'Executive Committee'. He also appealed for support to local Czechoslovak units, whose leadership was close to the duma chairman. This forced Mikhailov into hiding.<sup>78</sup>

This confrontation revealed the literally cut-throat nature of politics in western Siberia. The army were allowed to commit murder on behalf of the government and the individuals involved met with no punishment. Even Guins, a far more moderate man than Mikhailov, described the events of 21 September as an 'Unhappy Sacrifice'.<sup>79</sup> Taking place at precisely the same time as the Ufa State Conference, it meant that the government formed at Ufa would have to contend with an entrenched government with power concentrated in the hands of a few men who were quite willing to use it and who were backed up by a ruthless, conservative military. The machinations of the 'Omsk clique', led by Mikhailov, did not bring the struggle between Omsk and Tomsk to an immediate conclusion with the Novoselov murder. However, the Sibobduma was to be powerless from this point on, and once the situation had calmed a little, it was clear that no matter how close Siberia had come to witnessing a *coup d'état* from the left, effectively the opposite had happened.<sup>80</sup> One Soviet historian has made a very good case for naming this point as the end of the 'Democratic Counter-Revolution' in Siberia – and, in fact, due to the knock-on effects of this chain of events on the all-Russian government, in the whole of Russia.<sup>81</sup>

At the same time as the PSG was forming the Administrative Council and Mikhailov was taking control of the political situation in Omsk, the overstretched Volga Front was under heavy attack by the Red Army. Only a matter of weeks away from victory in the world war, the Allies were concentrating their forces and their attentions on Germany, and consequently no more additional troops were sent to General Poole in North Russia. Poole's troops were not able to make further progress along the Dvina or along the road to Vologda. The hopes of creating an Eastern Front proper had therefore, by the end of August, faded away to nothing. The Northern Front, if it can be termed such, was 1000 km from Moscow and 1400 km from Ekaterinburg.<sup>82</sup> Trotsky was able to focus his manpower against the People's Army,

<sup>78</sup> Guins, *Sibir'*, pp. 234–239; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, p. 42.

<sup>79</sup> Guins, *Sibir'*, p. 241.

<sup>80</sup> For a description of the actions of the Sibobduma as an attempted *coup d'état*, see Guins, *Sibir'*, p. 239; Gan, A. *Rossiia i Bol'shevizm: Materialy po istorii borby bol'shevizmom*. Shanghai: Russkago t-va pechatnago i izdatel'skago dela, 1921 (hereafter *Rossiia i Bol'shevizm*), p. 281.

<sup>81</sup> Shikanov, 'K voprosu o khronologicheskikh ramkakh', pp. 65–66.

<sup>82</sup> Zaitsov, *1918 God*, p. 224.

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which had no hope of ever receiving reinforcements from the Allies via the north. Had Komuch succeeded in coming to an agreement with the PSG prior to the Ufa State Conference, things might have been different. The reinforcements provided by the Siberian Army would probably have been enough to hold off the Red Army. However, it is unlikely that PSG would ever have assisted Komuch, no matter what concessions it was able to extract – in fact General Boldyrev claimed that the PSG held troops back deliberately in order to destroy Komuch.<sup>83</sup> As it was, the unification of power came too late for Komuch and the fall of Kazan, which occurred just as the state conference began to seriously debate the issues, put the Samara government in a very difficult position indeed. The Ufa State Conference was to now be conducted a comparatively short distance behind the collapsing Volga Front – a situation in which the PSG delegation would inevitably have the upper hand.

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<sup>83</sup> Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, p. 31.



## Chapter 4

### The Ufa State Conference and the Directory

The fate of the Democratic Counter-Revolution was decided at the conference. It was, indeed, the culmination of all the efforts of the Union of Regeneration at forming an all-Russian government that could co-ordinate the attempts of the 'White' generals to put an end to Soviet rule. The UR took centre stage at the conference, but having achieved its aim, the Union members found themselves in a rather delicate position. Their aim of creating a Directory was never hidden, but the UR had never made it clear to Komuch that the agreement with the National Centre had been to create a Directory of only three men, one of whom was supposed to be General Alekseev. It should be remembered that the members of the UR who had created the conference were almost all SRs, with the only notable exceptions being General Boldyrev and Lev Krol. The SR members of the UR (as well as Krol) were, as S. P. Mel'gunov has pointed out, officially obligated to their party to carry out the party line. The plans of the UR were then, effectively, a 'conspiracy' between the Kadet and SR underground. It is for this reason that Mel'gunov claims that, 'The tactics of silence in the end made the position of the "UR" somewhat confused and unclear – not only for the masses, but partly even in the consciousness of official representatives of the union.'<sup>1</sup> Mel'gunov had a point. Pepeliaev, despite being a member of the National Centre and (nominally) of the UR, decided not to attend the conference. On 28 September he gave his reasons to Czech General Radula Gaida: he did not believe, he said, in the kind of power to be created at Ufa, standing as he did for a military dictatorship.<sup>2</sup> This made Krol the only respected, politically active Kadet at the conference. But was he to act as a Kadet, or as a member of the UR? This contradiction meant that at times the *Vozhrozhdentsy* were on different sides of an argument and behaved more as party men.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the conference was clear – to unify power. However, the

<sup>1</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, pp. 196–197.

<sup>2</sup> GARF, f. 195 (Pepeliaev personal fond), op. 1, d. 1 ('Dnevnik'), l. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Krol had intended to act primarily as a UR member at the conference, as he did not agree with the Central Committee directives to Pepeliaev and he thought that Pepeliaev could act in the party name.

position of the UR at the conference illustrates perfectly the situation at Ufa. Once it came to converting general ideals into specific decisions, at times nobody was exactly sure what they were creating, or even why.

The conference had originally been due to open on September 1<sup>st</sup>, as agreed at the Second Cheliabinsk Conference, but was delayed for one week as the conference organisers waited for various delegations to arrive, including that of the PSG. The majority of delegates were staying at the Hotel Siberia, the venue of the conference. Outside, the street was decked with the Russian flag and banners proclaiming a free, united Great Russia.<sup>4</sup> According to one late Soviet-era study, the town itself was alive with a commotion that came from the presence of a large number of soldiers. Only the hotel itself remained calm.<sup>5</sup> Having spoken to Vologodskii on September 8<sup>th</sup>, conference chairman Avksent'ev decided to open the conference without the Siberian delegates. The other members of the presidium were to be Rogovskii as deputy chairman with Moiseenko and Murashev as secretaries. As no Russian conference was complete without a grand opening ceremony, the first working meeting began at 5.45 p.m. with an opening address by the UR leader.

Avksent'ev first spoke about the absence of a delegation from the PSG. Although the Siberians were not present, he said, he had spoken with their Prime Minister who sent his warmest greetings to members of the conference and his hopes for the creation of a firm, strong and united power. Speaking of the PSG, he said, 'If in fact they are not with us, in spirit they are here.' However, it seems likely that these words were intended for public consumption, as the UR leader at this point flashed an 'ironic' smile, according to Krol.<sup>6</sup> Of course, the likelihood was that the chairman was hoping to use this silent gesture to impress upon the SR majority in the crowd his own scepticism with regard to the Siberians. Avksent'ev went on to say that the conference would be short, that all efforts must be focused on the speedy creation of a power to save Russia, which could rise 'like a phoenix from the flames' as a free state. He then greeted the representatives of the Allies and the Czechoslovak army, both of which were applauded by the conference. Avksent'ev then went on to introduce members of the major delegations. First, he introduced Vol'skii, the leader of the Komuch

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However, as Pepeliaev never arrived at Ufa, Krol's position became understandably more difficult. See Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 93.

<sup>5</sup> Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 95.



delegation, who made speech on the 'mammoth task ahead' and noted that alongside the creation of a provisional power ahead of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, matters of 'concrete action' had to be decided. Here Vol'skii was probably alluding to the fact that the People's Army needed reinforcements from the rear to arrive quickly, if Samara was not to be retaken by the Red Army. There were two more speeches. N. N. Karpov, of the Sibobduma, spoke as a representative of Siberia, as a substitute for the PSG. This, of course, was absurd. The PSG would have been infuriated to know that another speech by a Komuch-friendly voice had been made in the name of Siberia. Next, S. N. Tret'iakov spoke on behalf of the newly-formed Council of Zemstvos and Towns. Avksent'ev then returned to the chair to announce that it was time to get down to work. The Siberian delegation had not arrived, but in line with the principle adopted at Cheliabinsk, a commission should be formed comprising one man from each delegation. This was unanimously accepted by the conference. Avksent'ev then invited the conference to return for its second session at 11.00 a.m. on 10 September.<sup>7</sup> All awaited the arrival of the Siberian delegation, without which any discussion was pointless.

### *The Delegations*

The conference, which on its opening day consisted of around one hundred delegates, was the bringing together of many different regional, political, administrative and religious public organisations, with wildly varying degrees of influence and genuine significance. With the exception of the Urals *oblast* government, the other regional

<sup>7</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 1, l. 1, l. 2. A note of explanation: as mentioned above (n. 58), *fond* 144 concerns the Ufa State Conference, and is contained in one single oversized *opis*. *Dela* numbers one to three contain the minutes of the conference, organized rather haphazardly and not according to any logical system, chronological or otherwise. In particular, session minutes were placed in any of the three *dela*, some being given the title 'Zhurnal' (particularly later sessions of the conference), followed by a number. Where a *Zhurnal* number has been assigned to any group of minutes, it is given here in the relevant footnote. Page numbering is similarly illogical. Occasionally, page numbers in any given set of minutes follow on from minutes of a previous set, and consequently the opening page is higher than one. In other cases, there are no page numbers. Where page numbers are given, they are included here. In cases where there are no page numbers, they have been added, taking page one to be the first page of the minutes for any particular session. The record of the Ufa State Conference was published in the 1920s when the papers themselves were being held at the Prague Archive. See Iziumov, A. 'Ufimskoe gosudarstvennoe soveshchanie', *Russkii istoricheskii arkhiv*. Sbornik No. 1, Prague (1929), pp. 57–280. However, the original minutes, now held at GARF in Moscow were used here as important supplementary material is included in the *fond*, much of which pertains to the behind-the-scenes workings of the conference. The published version simply contains the minutes of the sessions of the full conference and those of the Council of Elders.



governments represented (including the Kyrgyz Alash-Orda government, the Provisional Government of Turkestan, the Bashkir government and the Estonian Government) were likely to incline towards Komuch at the negotiating table, as were the national organisations of the Muslims, the Turko-Tatars and the Congress of Zemstvos and Towns. Komuch's democratic stance and its commitment to federalism ensured that such groups found the more autocratic politics of the PSG to be a far less attractive prospect. Some of these 'governments' were of the most marginal significance and it could be argued that the SR-dominated body was attempting to pack the conference with sympathetic delegates. Delegates from any party in opposition to the October Revolution were also permitted to attend, even if they were also members of other organisations. The result of this was that Maiskii attended the conference as a Social Democrat and Zenzinov as a representative of the PSR, and both made speeches accordingly. But both were also members of Komuch, and it would appear that the intention of the conference organisers was to manipulate the way delegates were accredited in order to give numerical support to the Samara government.

As Guins noted, the Popular Socialists and the *Edinstvo* group were more hostile to the old Constituent Assembly and as such were closer to the PSG. In fact, it was the representatives of these groups who were keen on finding a compromise between the two governments, rather than merely aligning themselves with one side or another. V. I. Fomin, head of the *Edinstvo* group, suggested in a speech made prior to the arrival of the Siberians that if there was to be a 'controlling organ', a consultative body that would exist parallel to the new government, perhaps it should be formed out of Komuch, the various political parties, the UR, national groups, Cossacks, trade and industry representatives, and trade union representatives.<sup>8</sup> Such a suggestion may have met with support had the membership of the conference been worked out more strictly and had the majority of delegations not been so much closer to one or other of the two major players of this game. However, that this suggestion fell upon deaf ears speaks volumes for the polarisation of the delegates. The Siberian Cossacks were also (understandably) closer in allegiance to Omsk, but for representatives of the other Cossack hosts, the situation was not so clear-cut. The autonomy of Siberia and its possible hegemony over European Russia during the anti-

<sup>8</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, p. 210.



Bolshevik struggle was as unpalatable as much of the dogma of the PSR. The Orenburg Cossacks had already established a working relationship with Komuch and Dutov was listed as a Committee member.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the numerical superiority of those who favoured Komuch at the conference over those who either favoured the PSG or preferred to find a compromise between the two governments, the Siberian delegation was the most important at the Ufa State Conference. There were three major reasons for this. Firstly, practically all delegates at the Ufa State Conference saw as the most vital task of the moment the creation of an all-Russian government to fight the dual enemy of Bolshevism and Germany created at Brest-Litovsk. Other considerations were essentially secondary, except for the fact that democracy had to be observed. The main purpose of the PSG was to assert the independence of its political system from the goings-on east of the Urals and, in particular, the pretensions of any outside body to all-Russian power and hence to authority higher than that of the Omsk government. Omsk had authority over a much larger area than Komuch, had more resources and a larger, stronger army. Secondly, and more importantly, the Volga–Urals area was under direct military threat. The eastward march of the Red Army was proving difficult to resist and, after Kazan, Trotsky would soon have Simbirsk and Samara to focus on. The anti-Bolshevik front was breaking and in retreat. Reinforcements from Siberia were vital if the victories of the summer were to have any meaning and if the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly was not to be forced to flee its home. Therefore, it was imperative that a solution be found, and found quickly. Finally, the Komuch delegation, although the largest, was also the least united. Its left-wing members, such as Kogan-Bernstein and Chaikin, would never have considered entering into a compromise with the Kadets, according to Boldyrev. The right of the party, led in the main by SRs affiliated with the UR (such as Argunov, Breshko-Breshkovskaia and Pavlov) were determined to form a coalition with the bourgeoisie at all costs, and in this sense they kept alive the spirit of Alexander Kerensky. For the sake of party unity, however, most deferred to the middle-ground of the party, occupied by Rogovskii and Gendel'man.<sup>10</sup> However, the links between different SRs would mean that Komuch was not a single, united bloc, isolated from the rest of the

<sup>9</sup> Hoover Institution, Moravskii Collection, Box 1, File 2, list of Komuch members, 13 August 1918.

<sup>10</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 204.

conference. They needed a compromise, and the centre of the party would have to find a way of making an agreement with the PSG.

### *The Conference at Work*

At the second session of the conference, which opened on the morning of 10 September, Avksent'ev attempted to give purpose to the assembly in the continued absence of the PSG. He announced to the crowd that he had spoken to Mikhailov, who had informed him that a Siberian delegation had been chosen, and that it was to include V. V. Sapozhnikov. As to work without the Siberians would be 'premature', the chairman suggested that to avoid losing time, a 'Council of Elders' should be elected to discuss the issues and allow the presidium to get on with the 'serious questions'. This was accepted and the session closed in order that each delegation could elect a representative.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the conference was able to do some preparatory work while waiting for the PSG delegation to arrive and for the real discussions to begin. As it turned out, certain groups of more minor significance (such as the Muslims, the Turko-Tatars and the representatives of the Turkestan, Bashkurdistan and Alash-Orda governments) elected a single member of the council; and in total, once the Council of Elders met, it consisted of eighteen men.<sup>12</sup> The majority of the work of the conference was, then, entrusted to a relatively small number of men. The full conference was there to act as a rubber stamp, to give greater weight to whatever compromises were reached by the Council of Elders. But the Council could not yet meet, of course, as the Siberian delegation had not arrived.

### *Enter the Siberians*

On 11 September 1918 the conference had done all it could without the PSG representatives. It was announced that the Siberians would arrive the next day, which must have left the guests of Hotel Siberia with little to do but gossip.<sup>13</sup> The full Siberian delegation was made up of Serebrennikov and Sapozhnikov (who both acted

<sup>11</sup> GARF, f. 144 op. 1, d. 1a, l. 3.

<sup>12</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 1a, ll. 3–4.

<sup>13</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 97.



as spokesmen) S. S. Starynkevich (from the Ministry of the Interior) and an official from the Ministry of Ways and Communications called Mironov, together with military representatives General P. P. Ivanov-Rinov (who had replaced Grishin-Almazov as Commander-in-Chief), General Katanaev and General Bobrik.<sup>14</sup> Given the length of their delay, it is unsurprising to find that when the delegation at long last arrived at the hotel, the scene which greeted them was 'noisy, crowded and very lively', and that, as Serebennikov later put it, 'As it turned out, our arrival at the conference had been anticipated with impatience, and even a little nervousness.'<sup>15</sup> It would appear that the UR were rather deflated by the appearance of this group of rather second-rate Siberians. Vologodskii was, as everybody knew, away in the Far East (which itself must have caused some suspicion), but there was concern that Mikhailov, 'the spirit of the government' had also not bothered to make the journey. As we know, Mikhailov had more pressing matters to deal with at Omsk, but there was also a message, implicit in the absence of the two most important members of the PSG from Ufa: that the conference was less important to Omsk than it was to Samara. Another concern, of a more practical nature was that the two Siberians leading the delegation 'were not of the calibre to make serious decisions on their own initiative'.<sup>16</sup>

The third session of the Conference opened that evening, with Serebrennikov being chosen as the PSG member of the presidium and given the post of Vice-Chairman, a post intended for Mikhailov.<sup>17</sup> The Siberian delegation had been given instructions from Omsk that the new power was to operate without responsibility to any other body until the election of a new Constituent Assembly.<sup>18</sup> Serebrennikov had written a statement on the position of the PSG on the way from Omsk to Ufa, and this was read out at the evening session by Sapozhnikov. The four points made were, in summary:

- 1) The All-Russian Government should be in the form of a Directory of no more than five men.

<sup>14</sup> Serebrennikov, I. I. 'K istorii Sibirskogo pravitel'stva', *Sibirskii arkhiv* Vol. 1 (Prague, 1929) (hereafter 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stva'), p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 98.

<sup>17</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 1a, l. 4a.

<sup>18</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, p. 211.

- 2) Political responsibility of the government should be only to a future organ which carried 'the will of the people', and until that time the executive should not be removable.
- 3) The executive should be firm, and of 'one will', with the aim being to create a strong 'Great Russia' and to fight Germany in union with the Allies.
- 4) The All-Russian Government should immediately create an all-Russian army, a comprehensive foreign policy, singular control over communications, post and telegraphs, finances and general state business, leaving other matters pertaining to the economy of Siberia to Siberia's autonomous governments.<sup>19</sup>

Other speeches that evening included a lengthy statement of the position of Komuch, made by Vol'skii. In this speech Vol'skii made it clear that he agreed with the principle of holding fresh elections to the Constituent Assembly. However, the existing Assembly (by inference Komuch) was the only competent organ of power with the authority to decide how and when new elections were to take place. Addressing the issue of the responsibility of the new government before another body, Vol'skii argued that, for Komuch, power without any such accountability was impossible – it was immoral and anti-democratic. Komuch, he insisted, had the right to scrutinise the actions of any provisional government. However, he continued, if this was accepted in principle, then constitutional details could be worked out, giving 'extraordinarily broad, special plenipotentiary powers to the collegiate government with full preservation of responsibility'.<sup>20</sup> This hint at a possible compromise would never be enough to satisfy the Siberians and pointed the way for a bitter struggle over the rights of the Constituent Assembly and the constitution of the new government. Such issues were skirted around by Boldyrev in his subsequent speech on behalf of the UR, preferring as he did to concentrate on the themes of bringing a range of opinions together in a coalition to fight the common enemy (although he did express the belief that the government did not need a 'parallel controlling apparatus').<sup>21</sup> The delegates from regional governments predictably supported Komuch on this matter, while the various Cossack hosts, who were jointly represented by General Khoroshkin, were behind the PSG. In the absence of any other senior delegates, Krol

<sup>19</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stva', pp. 8–9.

<sup>20</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 1a, l. 4a.

<sup>21</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 1a, l. 4b, ll. 46–49.



was forced to speak on behalf of the Kadets, saying that the party believed in a one-man dictatorship. However, he added on a personal note, as no single man was suited to the job, a Directory would have to be chosen as the next best alternative.<sup>22</sup>

It was immediately difficult for the UR to find a way to relate to the groups on both sides of the divide without getting too close to either. For example, the Sibobduma delegation had already spoken to the conference before the PSG arrived. As the PSG believed that the Duma was only supposed to have sent a 'greeting' delegation (according to negotiations between the Duma and the government held in Tomsk), there was confrontation between the two groups on this matter. The 'sharp contradictions' between the two were revealed to the conference and, consequently, it was more difficult for Serebrennikov and Sapozhnikov to claim to speak for all Siberia.<sup>23</sup> The struggle within anti-Bolshevik Russia was political, it was not regional, and the presence of a Sibobduma delegation with clear allegiance to the Constituent Assembly made it difficult for the PSG representatives to hide this fact. In sum, the evening of 12 September revealed the extent of the division between the two opposing sides of the conference, and brought the issue of the Constituent Assembly to the front of the minds of all those present. The next several days would be taken up by discussions on this matter.

### *The Council of Elders: The Battle for the Constituent Assembly*

The Council of Elders, the full title of which was the 'Commission of the State Conference on the Organisation of State Power', met for the first time on the morning of 13 September 1918.<sup>24</sup> It was decided that all decisions made would have to be on

<sup>22</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 100; Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 212.

<sup>23</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, p. 211.

<sup>24</sup> The full composition of the Council of Elders was: N. D. Avksent'ev, E. F. Rogovskii, I. I. Serebrennikov, V. N. Moiseenko and P. V. Murashev (the Conference Presidium); A. N. Bukheiklanov (Alash-Orda), M. Chokaev (Government of Turkestan), E. P. Berezovskii (Siberian Cossack host), A. N. Kruglikov (Council of Zemstvos and Towns of the Volga, Urals and Siberia), P. D. Shuvaer (Eniseisk Cossack host), I. E. Markov [later S. F. Znamenskii] (Popular Socialist Party), General V. G. Boldyrev (Union of Regeneration), L. Krol (Kadet Party), I. I. Voitov (Urals *oblast* Government), N. S. Anisimov (Government of the Orenburg Cossack host), G. M. Astrakhov (Astrakhan Cossack host), S. N. Shendrikov (Semirechensk Cossack host), I. S. Pezhemskii (Urals Cossack host), A. A. Kaelus (Estonian Provisional Government), S. Sh. Mamleev (National Administration of Turko-Tatars in Russia), V. P. Fomin (*Edinstvo*), V. M. Sapozhnikov (Provisional Siberian Government), V. S. Kibrik (Mensheviks), A. A. Validov (Bashkir government), M. Ia. Gendel'man (PSR), V. M. Zenzinov (Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly). Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 102.

the basis of a unanimous vote and that there was to be no compromise on this matter. This was partly because certain organisations represented were less significant than others – *Edinstvo*, for example, was an organisation which had only around ten members in the Volga–Urals–Siberian region. The PSG was, in contrast, a government representing the whole of the territory of the old empire east of the Urals.<sup>25</sup> This voting system was subsequently changed after a communiqué from Ataman Dutov on the serious situation at the front demanded that the conference work rapidly, and a majority system was agreed upon.<sup>26</sup> However, the conference had been called largely as a result of the differences between the Omsk government and its Samara-based rival. The majority of delegations were aligned with one side or the other, with a few, such as the UR, attempting to maintain a neutral position and broker an agreement to suit both sides. Consequently, the work of the Council of Elders boiled down precisely to the search for a compromise between the two governments. Anything that Serebrennikov and Sapozhnikov (on one side) and Vol'skii and Gendel'man (on the other), could agree upon would inevitably be approved by the Council, and subsequently by the Conference as a whole when it reconvened. It is unlikely, then, that any change in voting procedure would accelerate the work of the Council.

At the first session of the Council, Gendel'man spoke for the PSR, reiterating points already made by Vol'skii. The debate over a controlling body to supervise the Directory that morning allowed many of those without any clear allegiance to voice concerns. Berezovskii, speaking for the Siberian Cossacks, spoke of his fear that a legislative body would not have good relations with the Directory. This was echoed by Krol's arguments that at the time what was needed was a government that was unconstrained in its actions. He suggested a legislative body should be called six months *after* the creation of the government. This was the first time such a suggestion was made. This created the opening for Sapozhnikov to speak of the need for quick action, the implication being that debate and scrutiny were very nice, but not at a time of war. Krol joined in this argument with the point that western governments at a time of war were little more than dictatorships. A group of three to five men with supreme

<sup>25</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stva', p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 103.



power should be acceptable. Fomin made the point that a Directory was not a dictatorship and there was no reason to believe that it would turn into one.<sup>27</sup>

The first day of the conference, then, made it clear that despite the attempts of Komuch to engineer itself a majority, the debates were by no means simply the attempts of the moderate delegates to win the Siberians over in order to gain some concessions regarding the Constituent Assembly. Many of the more neutral delegates were as aloof from Komuch as they were from the Omsk delegation, and had real concerns regarding the running of the war effort. These more moderate delegates, such as Krol and Fomin, were to lead the way in suggesting compromises.

The second session, opening the following morning (14 September), continued where the previous session had left off. Having had time to digest the previous day's debate, Sapozhnikov, who was clearly impressed by Krol's suggestion that a controlling body should meet after six months, said that he had no objection to such a body existing in principle, merely to such a body being in constant session. This resulted in a lengthy exchange with Gendel'man, who wished the body to be able to make inquiries regarding the legality of actions taken by the government. Although this was ridiculed by Krol, Avksent'ev pointed out that the pre-revolutionary (1906) Russian Fundamental Laws had allowed the State Duma this right.<sup>28</sup> In this instance, the UR revealed that, having not worked out its position definitively on such matters, its members could associate themselves with any side at any given moment. Krol was clearly closer to Sapozhnikov here, whilst Avksent'ev was closer to his PSR origins. Such differences may have made it seem to some that the UR was an organisation without principles, without concrete plans. However, the flexibility that this allowed its membership made it essentially a debating body of men with the same ultimate goals. Details were less important. As a result, the UR may have been viewed with a degree of suspicion by many delegates, but it was well suited to involve itself in such a protracted debate – the presence of such openness allowed the proposition in this debate to rise to the fore that a controlling body should meet to scrutinise the actions of the government after a period of four to six months – a clear step forward in the negotiations. Unfortunately, these ideas took hours to develop. The Council of Elders frequently spent too much time arguing over exactly what they should be discussing rather than focussing on the matters in hand.

<sup>27</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 10–14.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14

The length of the debates, the hours of almost academic exchange between politicians who had plenty of experience debating, perhaps had roots in the pre-revolutionary era. Their lack of real responsibility and their non-involvement in any governing process which would have confronted them with the practical necessity of making quick decisions made the gathered men, many of whom had been members of illegal parties two years previously, rather indecisive and prone to procrastination. This, in turn, may have highlighted to the PSG members the dangers of working with such people at a time when resoluteness and singleness of purpose were needed. However, this would not have frustrated either Serebrennikov or Sapozhnikov. Serebrennikov had been given a clear set of instructions by Vologodskii prior to their departure from Omsk. They were, in summary:

- 1) There was to be no recognition of the Alash-Orda or Turko-Tatar governments. Those minorities were to be granted only cultural autonomy. The Cossacks were to be granted self-government only in some economic spheres, and the Urals was to be treated as a regional unit, not an independent government.
- 2) The all-Russian government was to 'absorb' Komuch and its authority was to cover all non-Bolshevik territory.
- 3) Turkestan was to submit to the authority of the PSG.
- 4) There was to be no recognition of councils of minor regional governments.
- 5) The Directory was to be the supreme organ of state power, and was not to be responsible to any other body. The same was to be true of the Council of Ministers.
- 6) A single constitution was to be worked out and was to include details of what to do regarding change in the composition of the Directory, how to affirm lawful acts, the necessary quorum to wield supreme power, relations with the army and the fleet, the role of the Directory with regard to foreign policy, rights of pardon, the way of appointing ministers and the conditions of their responsibility.



- 7) Until the calling of a new Constituent Assembly, there was to be no representative body. The assembly elected in 1917 was to be abandoned.
- 8) To work out the relative powers of the Directory, the Council of Ministers and the PSG, there should be a break of at least two weeks.
- 9) These instructions were to be defended fully and not changed.

This was not all. In direct-wire conversations, Serebrennikov was given two further 'pieces of advice'. On the eve of the Siberians' arrival in Ufa, Mikhailov suggested they attempt cut the talks off, and later Vologodskii instructed Serebrennikov 'not to hurry'.<sup>29</sup> The Siberian leader, who was at the time making his way east through Irkutsk, had been informed on 13 September of the advance of the Red Army towards Simbirsk and was therefore aware of the weakening position of Komuch. Vologodskii's diary entry for 16 September, a Monday, reveals that that weekend he had discussed with his delegation to the Far East the 'necessity that the Siberian government take upon itself all the functions of an all-Russian government', and continued, 'With this in mind it was decided to send our delegation at the Ufa Conference a telegram.'<sup>30</sup>

The aim of the Siberians, then, is clear: the Ufa State Conference was to be used as a stepping stone towards the dominance of the PSG over all anti-Bolshevik Russia, and there was to be no compromise with moderate socialism. The variance of opinion at the conference and the fact that finding anything remotely resembling common ground took days, therefore, played right into the hands of the PSG. As time wore on, the situation at the front became more perilous and the position of Komuch became less and less tenable. The PSG delegates themselves felt isolated from their colleagues, and were surrounded by hostile SRs and Czechoslovaks. The Siberians were faced with the task of deciding the fate of their region alone, as the Sibobduma group had, on the insistence of Serebrennikov, ceased to play an active role in the conference.<sup>31</sup> They therefore were in a rather uncomfortable position, with a strict set

<sup>29</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stva', pp. 10–11. Some of these instructions are contained in a telegram sent to Serebrennikov on 13 September. See GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 26, 'Telegramma vremennogo Sibirskogo pravitel'stvo svoei delegatsii na Ufimskom Soveshchanii ob organizatsii Vserossiskoi vlast'.

<sup>30</sup> Lyandres and Wulff (eds), *A Chronicle of the Civil War*, pp. 130–131 (diary entries for 13 and 16 September).

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

of instructions to abide by, attempting to stall the making of any concrete decisions, yet placed under a great deal of pressure to come to a compromise with the others.

The first two sessions had brought to the fore the notion that the new government could operate without any legislature for four to six months. This would, of course, satisfy one of Vologodskii's commissions and at least buy some time for the PSG to increase its grip on Siberia. Sapozhnikov used the opportunity at the evening session of 14 September to make a formal suggestion that the Directory should operate free from a controlling body for four months, at which point it should present an account of its work to another State Conference, which would then decide if its actions were legal. An amendment to this, suggested by Kruglikov, which allowed for the constant sitting of a 'mini-State Conference' was approved by the Council. However, despite making this progress, the Council then entered into another protracted debate over the issue of a controlling body. Unable to agree, the Council moved on to another issue – the programme of the government.

After some discussion, this proved in general to be rather easier to agree on than the rights of the Constituent Assembly. A document containing a suggested programme was circulated to the members of the Council, believed to be authored by a Komuch member.<sup>32</sup> The details put forward were, in summary:

1. Foreign Relations:
  - a) Struggle with Bolshevik power.
  - b) Reunification with lost regions of Russia (eg Ukraine ) on a federative basis.
  - c) Non-recognition of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.
2. Military Affairs:
  - a) Creation of a people's army outside the influence of political parties.

<sup>32</sup> Many of the contentious points, including the title 'People's Army', the point concerning the existing Constituent Assembly, came exactly from Komuch. In subsequent debate, these points were defended by Gendel'man.



- b) Intolerance of military-political organisations, thereby ensuring complete non-intervention of the military in civil politics.
- c) Appointment of a command solely on merit.
- d) Recreation of strong discipline with a strict concern for legality.

### 3. Civil Affairs:

- a) A federal democratic structure including the recognition of the autonomy of Siberia and the autonomy of other self-governing regions.
- b) The speedy convocation of the present Constituent Assembly.
- c) The re-establishment, in areas liberated from Bolshevik rule, of democratic zemstvo and urban self-government.
- d) The re-establishment of all civil freedoms.
- e) The acceptance of measures for the active preservation of state order. An energetic struggle with anarcho-Bolshevism and counter-revolution.
- f) A nationalities policy on the basis of the recognition of territorial and personal autonomy of peoples populating Russia.

### 4. The Economy:

- a) Struggle with economic collapse by ending Bolshevik attempts at socialisation.
- b) Action to develop the productive forces of the land. Attraction of foreign capital and the encouragement of entrepreneurship.
- c) State regulation of trade and industry.
- d) Acceptance of measures for the improvement of labour productivity.
- e) Development of workers' legislation to protect labour and regulate conditions of work.

- f) Recognition of the right to professional association.
- g) Repudiation of the state bread monopoly and price fixing. State procurement with the participation of private trade and the co-operative apparatus.
- h) No issue of new paper money, the establishment of a tax apparatus for direct and indirect taxation.
- i) Rural policy to be guided by the laws passed by the Constituent Assembly on 5 January [1918] to maximise usage of land on basis of equalisation, applied to the regional peculiarities of separate regions.

This provoked a great deal of disagreement. The first point of discussion was the title of the army, which Krol and Boldyrev both found objectionable. There was also much discussion of the practicalities of creating regions of national autonomy when the spread of different nationalities was so diffuse, with different national groups intermingling together. This, in turn, caused, the Bashkir representative, to complain that in many areas (including his own), national self-government was already realised and the state conference could not reduce their rights. There was also some concern by Cossack representative Berezovskii as to what constituted 'counter-revolution'. Gendel'man's reply was that this was anything that was against the democratic republic. Clearly, the SRs were concerned that it might not be easy to keep the army out of civil affairs. There was also some concern that the programme did not address rural affairs in sufficient detail and a small commission was appointed to discuss this matter further.<sup>33</sup> This programme was discussed over the next few days, with most of the changes concerning the wording. The major disagreement was still, of course, the Constituent Assembly, which the Council returned to the following day.

<sup>33</sup> The text of the programme and the debates over each section can be found in GARF, f.1 44, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 20–24.



## *The First Compromise*

With the fall of Kazan on 10 September, the shape of the Komuch delegation was to change significantly – and with it the balance of power at the conference. Several of the leading Komuch delegates (including Maiskii, Filipovskii and Rakov) left for Samara on the evening of 14 September. This was significant for several reasons. The partisan nature of the Samara committee was more clearly exposed, as Maiskii, the only senior affiliated Menshevik was no longer present. The Komuch delegation became more generally associated with the SR representatives as a whole, as some of the leading Komuch members were no longer there to keep the delegates in check. According to Maiskii, who was to feel increasingly isolated from events at the conference, the left-group of SRs at Ufa were now led by Vol'skii (with Avksent'ev, of course, as the leader of the right). However, a new 'centre' group emerged under the leadership of Gendel'man, who tried to play the role of 'honest broker'. Therefore, the fall of Kazan caused the position of the SRs at Ufa to be weaker not only because it revealed how quickly Komuch needed a solution to the internal wranglings within the anti-Bolshevik camp, but also because it resulted in a less resolute party line being pursued. A gradual drift to the right was the only likely outcome.<sup>34</sup>

That this change in the Komuch delegation heightened the role played by Gendel'man is echoed by Mel'gunov. As the Council argued over the fate of the Constituent Assembly, Gendel'man, the 'voice of the centre' of the Komuch delegation, attempted to satisfy all his colleagues, who formed a far from homogeneous group.<sup>35</sup> He particularly insisted on the rights of the existing Constituent Assembly. The difference of opinion in the Council was, in essence, what to do in the present circumstances, which all agreed were not ideal. All believed that the 1917 Constituent Assembly was elected under distorted circumstances and should not stand permanently. However, Gendel'man insisted that as there had to be a representative body in session, Komuch was the best available. Other more neutral voices sided with the PSG opinion that if Komuch was the most suitable body to perform such a controlling role, then it would be better to form a constitution that did not include one.<sup>36</sup> Fomin was especially scathing, terming the Samara SRs a 'parody

<sup>34</sup> Maiskii, *Demokraticheskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, pp. 232–237.

<sup>35</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, pp. 204–205.

<sup>36</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3 ll. 25–26.

of the Constituent Assembly' and a 'quasi-Constituent Assembly'.<sup>37</sup> It emerged from this discussion that the objection of those who had no clear allegiance to either Komuch or the PSG was that around seventy deputies was in no way sufficient to act as a quorate body of the assembly, regardless of anyone's opinion of its rights.

It is clear that that evening a deal was made between Lev Krol (acting as a Kadet), the PSG, *Edinstvo* and the Cossacks (who had formed a 'strange unity' at the conference, according to Mel'gunov).<sup>38</sup> This centre-right bloc consisted of the most vocal members of the Council who were not aligned to Komuch, and the growing frustration of the other participants with Gendel'man is all too apparent from a perusal of the minutes of these meetings. In this atmosphere of 'gossip and intrigue', as Boldyrev later put it, the debates in the Council were turning into 'Krol versus Gendel'man'.<sup>39</sup>

The following day Krol began by putting three questions to Gendel'man on behalf of his bloc. The questions concerned a quorum of the Constituent Assembly and were: how large did the SR consider a quorum would have to be; how long would be given for this quorum to gather; and what would its tasks be? General Boldyrev then made it clear that the UR wished to be included in the group represented by Krol, leaving the Komuch delegates isolated, fighting their cause without a single ally. Gendel'man made fairly quick replies for the first two questions (although the third was ignored), which would indicate that the matter had already been discussed with his fellow party members. On the matter of the size of the quorum, simple mathematics was resorted to. The full assembly elected in November 1917 consisted of 810 deputies. Subtracting the Bolshevik and Left-SRs, the anti-Bolshevik assembly stood at a membership of around five hundred. Therefore, Gendel'man suggested, a quorum of 200–250 ought to be enough. This quorum, he went on, should be allowed to vote on the new government within a 'minimal' amount of time, with one month to six weeks being the suggested limit, which Gendel'man said should be possible.<sup>40</sup> Was this possible? The Samara committee had taken nearly three months to gather less than one hundred deputies. Many of those who may wish to attend were trapped inside Soviet Russia. Together with this, there would have been a certain number amongst them who did not agree with the aspirations of the Samara group and who

<sup>37</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 108.

<sup>38</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 205.

<sup>39</sup> Boldyrev, *Direktoiriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, p. 45.

<sup>40</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, l. 30.



would have purposefully avoided taking their seats alongside the SR majority, which would have been almost impossible to overturn. Nevertheless, this discussion would form the basis behind the agreement made at Ufa regarding the Constituent Assembly.

### *The Membership of the Directory*

Having made this initial compromise over the Constituent Assembly, the way was clear to discuss in more detail the composition and size of the new government. In general, it was accepted from the beginning that there would have to be a collegiate government. However, there was much disagreement over how representatives should be chosen. Representatives of the various national governments, perhaps fearing that their own concerns would continually be put to one side by a government more preoccupied with nationwide concerns, expressed their desire for representation. Chokaev (of the government of Turkestan) and Validov (of the Bashkir government) claimed that they should have a permanent delegation to the supreme authority.<sup>41</sup> This would, of course, have led to every group being granted a delegation attached to the Directory and would have made the organs of power too unwieldy. This ran counter to one of the very reasons that the State Conference had been called. As Fomin and Krol pointed out, the aim of the conference was to appoint members of the Directory on a personal basis, rather than choose representatives from this or that group. If power was to be concentrated in the hands of a few men, the men chosen would have to be representative of Russia as a whole, they would have to be acceptable to all those at the conference and would have to be known inside Bolshevik Russia.<sup>42</sup> This was precisely the thinking behind the agreement made between the UR and the National Centre in the spring. Given the state of anti-Bolshevik politics by the middle of September, this may have been somewhat idealistic. There was no question that the Directory would have to contain, for example, a member of the PSR who was acceptable to Komuch. By the same token, there would have to be a representatives of the PSG and the military. But if other groups were given representatives, the number of Directors would spiral out of control and the notion of firm power would be lost. Nevertheless, Validov articulated his desire not to be ruled by a group of SRs and claimed that his group should have a place in the 'higher organs of power', and not

<sup>41</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, l. 31.

<sup>42</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, l. 31.

merely to be represented in the Council of Ministers by a nationalities secretariat, as Krol suggested.<sup>43</sup>

This was clearly unacceptable to the party political representatives and a new cleavage was thus revealed in the Council between those who hoped the new government would be a coalition of various representatives, and those who saw the Directory as a smaller body, such as Markov, the Popular Socialist, who even suggested that those who were elected to the Directory should leave their party.<sup>44</sup> Such a smaller body would appeal to notions of *nadklssnost* (i.e. the notion that politicians should not merely articulate the desires of one social group) which still remained in the minds of many delegates. Here, *nadklssnost* was being applied to nationalities as well as classes. A small government would contain symbolic leaders, who could represent the will of all those who opposed Soviet power. The Directory would be defined precisely by what it was not – by what it was *against* – rather than by what it represented. The only problem was, of course, finding a body of only a few men which was acceptable to the various nationalities, the Cossacks, and, crucially, to Komuch and the PSG.

As a result of these debates over the nature of the Directory, came the first discussion on precisely how many members the Directory should have. Berezovskii, speaking for the Cossacks, said the Directory should have three members. Krol agreed – as did Boldyrev for the UR, adding that five would not be objectionable and pointing out that, ‘One is difficult to find, it is easier to find three and easier still to find five.’ Sapozhnikov, Voitov (the Urals representative) and Kruglikov (the zemstvo representative) all called for a Directory of five, and this was conditionally supported by Fomin, although he expressed the belief that three would be better. Only those close to Komuch wanted more than five, including Chokaev and Zenzinov. The matter was not decided at the session, which had nevertheless made a great deal of progress. The number of Directors that was most acceptable to the greatest number of groups was clearly five. However, even if this was agreed on, the Council would find it difficult to find five members that all would approve of, and it had been decided, on the suggestion of Markov and Sapozhnikov, to leave this until the programme of the

<sup>43</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, l. 32.

<sup>44</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, l. 32.



government had been decided.<sup>45</sup> In addition, it still remained to iron out the differences between Komuch and the PSG over the Constituent Assembly.

### *Unenthusiastic Agreement*

The PSG members sat back and allowed the other delegates to discuss this matter the following day, without there ever being any danger of a breach in the negotiations. Early on in the session of 16 September, Serebrennikov quietly stated that the Directory should only be responsible to a newly elected Constituent Assembly. He and Sapozhnikov then remained circumspect and watched the other delegates argue the matter out. It was not proving difficult for them to delay the decision-making process, as Vologodskii had requested. However, the atmosphere of the discussions, in which many other delegates such as Krol, who had already entered into healthy relations with the PSG, appeared ready to enter into a compromise with Komuch, must have made some impression on the PSG delegation. Serebrennikov himself later pointed out that he felt the delegation was working 'under difficult circumstances'.<sup>46</sup> During the discussions of 16 September, Gendel'man attempted to win support for a quorum of two hundred Constituent Assembly members, to gather by 1 November 1918. This was not acceptable to the other groups, as it was a long way from the four months of power without responsibility initially discussed. The Council then adjourned to allow Krol's 'group of five' – the Kadets, the Cossacks, *Edinstvo*, the UR and the PSG – to decide their position.

When the session reconvened, Krol read out the results of this discussion. The five groups saw that the SRs considered that only the Constituent Assembly had the right to perform certain governmental tasks. With this in mind, the five groups had come to the decision that the quorate body necessary to act in the name of the Assembly should be 250-strong, and that the Constituent Assembly should not interfere in the work of the new authority by delaying its convention until 1 February, 1919. At that date, were 250 deputies not gathered, the government would be duty bound to do all in its power to expedite the gathering of a quorum and, upon the

<sup>45</sup> The minutes in GARF of this session appear to be incomplete. However, a concise account of this discussion is given in Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 112.

<sup>46</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stva', p. 12.

opening of the Assembly, would present an account of its work.<sup>47</sup> For the first time, the PSG delegation had displayed a willingness to accept a role for the existing Constituent Assembly although, in the context of the whirlwind of civil war four and a half months must have seemed a long way off. After a lengthy break, the session reopened and Gendel'man was able to put forward the view of his delegation that the Constituent Assembly quorum should open a month earlier than suggested by Krol. If, by 2 January 1919, he suggested, a body of 250 deputies had not been successfully gathered, the date should then be moved to 1 February, but a smaller quorum should then be accepted, and the government should do all it could to assist the Constituent Assembly. The meeting then once again descended into protracted wrangling over the rights of the old Constituent Assembly as a 'state body', over the pretensions of Komuch to speak for the whole assembly, and over the size of the quorum should the convocation date be put back to 1 February. Should a smaller body of (as Gendel'man wanted) 170 members, have the same functions, or should it merely concern itself with calling new elections, as Berezovskii suggested? Despite Avksent'ev's attempts to find a compromise between the two sides, there was no agreement and the meeting again broke up. The sole achievement of the day was to agree that the newly formed 'Congress of the Constituent Assembly' was to act with one sole function: to gather the Constituent Assembly.<sup>48</sup>

It is clear from the memoirs of Krol on these sessions that Sapozhnikov and Serebrennikov were delaying concrete decision-making.<sup>49</sup> Some progress was allowed to be made, but the discussions over the Constituent Assembly were easy to drag out. The following day saw much calmer discussion over the candidacy for the Directory but, as with the previous day, the PSG delegations stated that they were awaiting further instructions and could not act decisively. However, after the previous discussion on the matter, the Council fairly amicably agreed that the Directory should consist of five members. In discussing candidacies, Gendel'man, unsurprisingly, called for a government in which the SRs had 'supremacy', and suggested E. M. Timofeev, Avksent'ev and Zenzinov.<sup>50</sup> This formation, which placed Avksent'ev as the candidate of the right, would of course never be acceptable to any other side. This caused Krol to talk about the possibility of including a Kadet in the Directory. Astrov,

<sup>47</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 35–38.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, ll. 39–44.

<sup>49</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 115–116.

<sup>50</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 54–55.



the prime candidate, had discussed this matter with Krol in Moscow and had expressed his reluctance to have any association with the 1917 Constituent Assembly.<sup>51</sup> Other significant figures whose names were mentioned were Argunov and Chaikovskii. However, once again no concrete decision was made, as more arguments over the quorum of the Constituent Assembly took up most of the next day, with the PSG delegation (which again was clearly stalling) requesting a break to discuss the compromise of 250 members by 1 January with the number reduced to 170 if the calling of the body had to be postponed one month.<sup>52</sup> As the session reconvened, the PSG had agreed to this compromise. A breakthrough had been achieved, although (as Serebrennikov pointed out), 'This agreement was not born in an atmosphere of enthusiasm.'<sup>53</sup> The two Siberians did not even attend the reconvened session to inform the rest of the Council of their decision, entrusting Kruglikov with the task of passing on a message.<sup>54</sup>

One thing should be pointed out here: the agreement made over the role of the Constituent Assembly in the future construction of power was not related to the struggle in Siberia between Mikhailov's Administrative Council and the Sibobduma. The struggle in Siberia was at its high point at precisely the time when compromises were being made at Ufa, and the concessions entered into by Sapozhnikov and Serebrennikov were not the result of perceived weakening of their position that allegedly came about as a result of the Novoselov affair, which took place on 21 September.<sup>55</sup> The compromise was a genuine success for those who attempted to mediate between the two sides. Here, credit must go to Krol, who managed to find a formula which brought the UR and the moderate socialists of the Popular Socialist Party and *Edinstvo* closer to the PSG. In fact, given the situation at the Volga Front, it was the Komuch delegation that was weakest of all. Perhaps the direct threat to Samara (plans to evacuate the town were drawn up on 19 September) forced the hand of the SRs into accepting a period of at least three months before they had any authority. Whilst the Constituent Assembly would still be allowed to reconvene as a state body (should it create a quorum of members), its functions would be very limited and this agreement ensured that Komuch would be forced to wind-up its business as a

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, ll. 56; Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 118.

<sup>52</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 56–65; Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 117–119.

<sup>53</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibirskogo Pravitel'stva', p. 13.

<sup>54</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 120.

<sup>55</sup> This assertion is made most notably in Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 221.

government. If the SRs of Komuch were to have any influence in the near future, they had the mammoth task of gathering well over one hundred more deputies in the amount of time they had just taken to gather sixty or seventy in far easier circumstances. The PSG delegation may have felt as though it had climbed down over the Constituent Assembly, but in reality little of substance had been given away.

### *The Formation of the All-Russian Government*

The full state conference opened its fourth meeting after a break of several days on the evening of 18 September. A rather grand series of reports informed the massed delegates that agreement had been made on the programme of the government and the position of the Constituent Assembly, but in his closing speech Avksent'ev made it clear that the Council of Elders needed two to three more days to work out other details.<sup>56</sup> The two major tasks that remained were to agree the relations that would exist between the new government and the regional governments (including the PSG) and, of course, the composition of the Directory. The Council of Elders met again with this in mind the following day.

In many ways the decision over the future of regional governments was the most important. The all-Russian government, in order to fulfil its role as the single co-ordinating force behind the anti-Bolshevik effort, needed the support of every segment of the non-Soviet territories. If there were further squabbling and intrigue after the formation of the government, the State Conference would have failed in its objectives. Yet again, though, there was no possibility of agreement on this, as the Siberians insisted on their own autonomy and refused to agree to a constitution that called for regional governments to 'yield to the supreme power'.<sup>57</sup> Some of the discussion was academic in nature. Of course, nobody could reasonably have expected the Bashkirs to be granted the same level of autonomy as Siberia, yet representatives from many regions expressed their concern over their own sovereignty. Eventually the problem was again fudged, as Krol's resolution that the fate of the regional governments should be left to 'the wisdom of the Provisional All-Russian Government' was accepted by all.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the Siberians were relieved, as

<sup>56</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 1, 'Zhurnal 4', ll. 85–90.

<sup>57</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, l. 66.

<sup>58</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 123.



neither they nor the representatives of any government would have to sign their own death-warrant at Ufa. What this meant was anybody's guess. Would some smaller regional formations continue to operate as local governments, and function as branches of the all-Russian government when it came to more important decisions? The network of regional governments could, of course, have been made use of in this way as part of a larger, national apparatus of the executive, and it may have been that those involved in arranging the State Conference had hoped to create such a consensus. What was clear by this stage, though, was that such hopes were unrealistic and that business for the Directory would be far more difficult than that. An important aim of the conference had been to agree these matters in advance: to put an end to debate over who had what authority and pave the way for a government that could act decisively in the knowledge that its decisions would be respected by all those who had sanctioned its creation. The position of the new coalition over the regions was, therefore, to be as unclear as that of the 1917 Provisional Government was over Ukraine, for example. Now, the Directory would be forced to act alongside the PSG and, until it could convince the Siberians to give in to a higher authority, it would have a rival. Authority would be transferred from the regional governments to the Directory 'as only it demands': the new government would, on paper, have the authority to order regional governments to dissolve themselves as and when it saw fit but whether this would ever happen in Siberia would depend upon the extent to which the new government could bring pressure to bear upon the PSG.

Having admitted its failure to find a solution to the problems relating to regional government and the new all-Russian government, all that remained for the Council of Elders was the election of the Directory. The members of the council each nominated three or four figures, with the exception of the Cossacks and the Mensheviks, who followed the lead of Chokaev (who, speaking for the governments of Alsh-Orda, the Bashkirs, Turkestan and the Turko-Tatars, announced that they would not vote, but would go along with the general consensus provided that the expressed will of the new Directory was the creation of a federal Russia). Once all the nominations were sorted by Kruglikov, it was possible to break the voting down to seven lists, with each list corresponding to the wishes of one major group. It should be noted, however, that the Siberians delayed matters again by announcing that they could not provide a list of nominations until instructions were received from Vologodskii. The lists were:

- 1) From the SRs: Timofeev, Avksent'ev, Zenzinov.
- 2) From the Kadets: Boldyrev, Argunov, Chaikovskii, Astrov.
- 3) From the Urals: Boldyrev, Avksent'ev, Maslov.
- 4) From the UR: Avksent'ev, Boldyrev, Astrov.
- 5) From the Popular Socialists: Chaikovskii, Avksent'ev, Boldyrev, Astrov.
- 6) From the Estonian Government: Avksent'ev, Boldyrev, Timofeev, Maslov.
- 7) From *Edinstvo*: Argunov, Maslov, Breshko-Breshkovkaia, Astrov.<sup>59</sup>

An analysis of the nominations provides an interesting insight into what each party would have found acceptable and inevitably provokes deliberations over what might have been. Firstly, it does seem curious that some groups made four nominations while others only made three. Given that those who nominated four candidates were less closely involved in the political struggle between Komuch and the PSG, it would seem that they made more nominations because they held a less determined position regarding the form that the Directory should take. The choices made by the groups which made three nominations suggest that they in fact were naming their considered ideal three-man Directory, perhaps in the hope that their suggestions would win favour. A five-man Directory was more likely, though, as that was the number most likely to appeal to most delegates. Given this fact, and given the pattern of voting, it would appear that those close to the UR had gained a degree of credibility by acting in a consistently principled and non-partisan manner. Argunov, Avksent'ev, Boldyrev and Chaikovskii were heavily nominated and it would have been a logical conclusion, from the weight of support that they gained, that all of them would make it to the final five. However, the *raison d'être* of the Directory was to be a broad-based coalition of all anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia, and for three of five members to be socialists would clearly not be acceptable to the right. In many ways, as the right was poorly represented at Ufa, the State Conference needed to choose candidates that were the

<sup>59</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, l. 70.



most right-wing it could stomach, as this new government would still have to convince conservative elements in Siberia and in South Russia to support it. It would be almost impossible to create a Directory without a member from the PSG, so the inclusion of one general, most likely Boldyrev, and one other member of the bourgeoisie would have left room for a maximum of two socialists. The nominations from the Kadets, which must have been made by Krol, made it clear that Avksent'ev was not acceptable, and that Argunov was the only SR that the party would deal with. If there was to be one socialist in the government who would not alienate the centre-ground and the bourgeoisie, it was Chaikovskii and, without a doubt, for there to be two socialists in the Directory, one had to be the veteran Popular Socialist. Moreover, the lack of suitable candidates was highlighted by the fact that two of those who received a significant share of the nominations, Astrov and Chaikovskii, were not present at Ufa and their ability to take up their posts (or even if they would wish to) was by no means certain. The two absentees represented a form of middle-ground politics that did not contribute in any way to the debates at Ufa, and a great deal of expectation was being placed upon them by several delegates, their names being thrown into the debates without their knowledge and with great regularity.

The difficulty in finding a mix of candidates that would please any party, let alone all of them, is clear. According to S. P. Mel'gunov, the debates on this issue verged on 'disorder', as the different groups all attempted to gain the greatest level of representation. Here the great historian has sharp words for the role played by the UR. The discord, he claimed 'could have been avoided if the members of the "Union of Regeneration" had more definitely conducted the conference along the line established at Moscow'.<sup>60</sup> Should the conference organisers have insisted upon a Directory of three? A European Russian socialist, possibly a Komuch member, could have formed a government with Boldyrev and Vologodskii, but would that government have been capable of working together and would the regional governments have approved it in the full sessions of the conference? It may be true that the UR made use of such problems, and the improvisation needed at such a turbulent moment, to create a government in which it gained unrealistically high representation. The decision on the final membership of the Directory took more time to reach, due to the lack of input by the Siberian delegation. The session of 20

<sup>60</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 226.

September decided to postpone any further meeting until the PSG group was authorised to make a decision. Instead, council members were instructed to consider the fact that each member would require a deputy to act in their absence, and that it would be useful to dwell upon possible candidates for such roles.<sup>61</sup> The PSG delegation also revealed their nominations: Mikhailov, Vologodskii, Alekseev, Sapozhnikov, and the Siberian Kadet S.V. Vostrotin (whose candidacy was immediately attacked by the SRs, as he was seen as being far too close to Japan). The SRs also said that Avksent'ev was an acceptable candidate only if accompanied by a more 'orthodox' SR (such as Timofeev, Donskii or Zenzinov) and that Argunov was not acceptable. In fact, the SRs gave the veteran party member an ultimatum: either he refused his candidacy or he would face expulsion from the party.<sup>62</sup>

When the Council reopened on the evening of 21 September, the agreed membership of the Directory was announced by General Boldyrev as consisting of himself, Astrov, Vologodskii, Chaikovskii and Avksent'ev. That Avksent'ev was chosen in place of Argunov seems quite clear, and it is unsurprising that the conference chairman chose his fellow UR-member as a deputy. It is also unsurprising that General Alekseev was chosen to be Boldyrev's deputy. His presence on the list would have been reckoned by many as a concession to the right. Had the old general ever succeeded in making the trip east, it is possible that Boldyrev would have stepped down in his favour. Sapozhnikov was, fairly predictably, chosen to deputise for Vologodskii, who was, of course, still in the Far East. The only problems for the council related to who was to deputise for the two very important members, Astrov and Chaikovskii (who, unlike the other members, were unavailable to select their deputies). The evening session of 22 September showed that under such difficult circumstances, the different sides could never be reconciled, as Krol and Gendel'man became embroiled in a fierce argument over the naming of an SR such as Donskii, Timofeev or Zenzinov as Chaikovskii's deputy. Krol made it clear that a well-known national figure such as Chaikovskii could not be replaced by an SR who was unknown, for example, to Kadets. The debate took so long that no final decision was made over who should deputise for Astrov, although by the end of the evening, it was agreed to place Zenzinov's name on the list alongside that of Chaikovskii.<sup>63</sup> This was

<sup>61</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 70–71.

<sup>62</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 124–125.

<sup>63</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 3, l. 74.



bound to cause controversy: as Mel'gunov put it, 'this immediately violated the equilibrium of forces in the coalition Directory'.<sup>64</sup> However, this decision, unlike that over the role of the Constituent Assembly, was made in the aftermath of the conference being informed of the Novoselov affair. Zenzinov was, indeed, utterly unacceptable for the PSG delegation as a potential member of the Directory, but Serebrennikov felt that the murder had 'undermined the moral authority of the Siberian government and shook the stability of the position of its representatives at the Ufa State Conference'.<sup>65</sup> The Komuch delegation had succeeded in placing an 'orthodox' SR in the government after all, as it was unclear how long it would be before Chaikovskii took up his post, if indeed he would at all. The final list in the protocols of the Council of Elders shows that the Kadet Vinogradov was not selected at the end of the Council sessions, and was in fact suggested a little time before the general session of the State Conference the following day.

The final full session of the conference, on 23 September, was not the happy occasion many had anticipated when the delegates had first gathered over two weeks previously. Not only had a number of compromises been entered into that, in effect, pleased nobody, but the situation outside the bubble of the conference had changed dramatically. Events at the front and in Siberia showed that the Directory was to be presented something of a poisoned chalice. The Bolsheviks were recovering much of the ground lost during the summer and were threatening the Urals, and a retreat further east would bring the government closer to the reactionary forces of Siberia led by Ivan Mikhailov, a man who (if he was, indeed, responsible for the events surrounding Novoselov's murder) was prepared to stop at nothing to ensure he got his way. The uncertainties that lay ahead, regarding not only the situation at the front and in Siberia but also how the Directory would even rule and what its policy towards regional governments would be, meant that Ufa was not the end of the road to unification of power in the anti-Bolshevik camp that it was intended to have been. Thus, the reports on the organisation of power, the reading out of greetings and the final 'solemn oath' undertaken by the Directory were heard by a less than buoyant crowd of delegates. The leaders of the UR had succeed in bringing Komuch and the PSG together, but the outcome of their efforts was far from certain.

<sup>64</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. I, p. 226.

<sup>65</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibir'skogo pravitel'stvo', p. 14.

## *Triumph or D  b  cle?*

Was the Ufa State Conference a ‘triumph’ for the UR, as has recently been suggested by one important western study on the period?<sup>66</sup> Or, was it, as a late Soviet version claimed, a victory for *kerenshchina*?<sup>67</sup> In order for the Directory to successfully co-ordinate the anti-Bolshevik war as a genuine all-Russian government, it was vital that the formulas agreed upon at Ufa were acceptable to those to the left and right of the UR, not just the extreme wings of its own membership. For example, Komuch delegates such as Gendel’man, who had played a major part in reaching the compromise over the role and necessary quorum of the Assembly, would have to persuade other members of the Central Committee of the PSR that the Ufa compromises were desirable and workable. The PSG would also have to be relied upon to actively support the Directory. But the agreement over the membership of the Directory was made by Serebrennikov and Sapozhnikov under difficult circumstances, and there was no guarantee that the Ufa accord would be accepted in Omsk, which had become a centre of government by clique. Neither the SR-based Komuch delegation nor that of the PSG was led by the most significant and influential of their camps’ membership, and the involvement of both sides in the conference did not necessarily mean that all associated with them would stand by the Directory. In little over two months, the situation had changed from one where representatives of Komuch could not even talk to or bear to be in the same room as those of the PSG to one of supposed harmony, under the umbrella of an all-Russian government born of the desire to unite the anti-Bolshevik camp. But would these compromises satisfy anybody?

Surely, one of the few things that could have saved the Directory from becoming over-entangled in Siberian politics would have been to have gained the support of the National Centre, which had based itself in South Russia and which, by the time of the conference, had become more associated with the Volunteer Army. It was vital that Astrov take up his post as a member of the Directory, even if he was to remain in South Russia as a representative there of the all-Russian government, perhaps alongside General Alekseev. However, the Ufa State Conference had flouted

<sup>66</sup> Swain, *Origins of the Russian Civil War*, p. 224.

<sup>67</sup> Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, pp. 76, 78. Ioffe’s comparison between the politics of the UR at this time and that of Kerensky is based on a quotation from an unnamed ‘contemporary’, who said that Ufa in September 1918 reminded him of Petrograd under Kerensky.



the agreement made by the UR and the National Centre in the spring by creating a five-man Directory rather than a triumvirate, and the PSR influence in the government was surely too strong for the Kadet-based group to stomach, particularly when the conference had lacked any genuine Kadet sponsorship. As the Kadet Lev Krol, who was more favourably disposed towards the Directory than any other member of his party (perhaps even more than Vinogradov), later recalled of the final session of the conference, 'In our hearts there was not only no enthusiasm, but there was not even the most modest, simple satisfaction...we had to acknowledge that the Directory, formally accepted unanimously was, in fact, "forced".'<sup>68</sup>

The unification of power had been agreed upon in the vaguest of manners. The programme of the future government outlined by the conference was more of a manifesto, a statement of principles designed to satisfy the largest number of delegates, rather than a concrete statement of policy. There was no timetable for the handing over of power from the regional governments to the central authority. There was no agreement over which regional institutions would be allowed to remain in existence, or over the delineation of power between those bodies and the all-Russian government. Similarly, no administrative apparatus of government had been set up and no firm decisions had been made as to the creation of ministries and the appointment of representatives of various delegations to appropriate portfolios. It even remained to be seen where the seat of this future government would be. A significant step had been made at Ufa in finding some common ground between those representatives of the various governments and political bodies who actually attended, but it remained to be seen whether this step was a step forward at all. Instead of strictly defined procedures and rules, Ufa created a system of promises and solemn undertakings; and rather than heralding a new era in the development of the anti-Bolshevik struggle, the Ufa State Conference was a compromise for compromise's sake. Rather than putting an end to the intolerable struggle for hegemony within the anti-Bolshevik camp, the Ufa accord merely marked the beginning of a new period of uncertainty. Contrary to Geoffrey Swain's assertion of a UR 'triumph' at Ufa, therefore, the only winner out of this fudge was surely Lenin, as the creation of the new government did nothing to immediately strengthen the front. The outcome of the Ufa State Conference, in fact, was a situation as chaotic and an authority as flimsy as

<sup>68</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 130..



those created by the Moscow State Conference of 1917. Kerensky's old friends had indeed carried on his work.

### *The Road to the 'Citadel of Reaction'*

The new 'All-Russian Government' did not leap onto action in the manner necessary to win respect. Consisting of two full members and three deputies, it lacked authority from the beginning. Moreover, it would take time for news to travel across Russia to the absentee Directors that the government had been created, and longer still for Astrov and Chaikovskii to decide whether or not to accept their posts as Directory members. As soon as the Directory was formed, Avksent'ev contacted Chaikovskii via the network of Allied consulates, to inform the co-founder of the UR of the outcome of the Ufa State Conference and to ask if he would make the journey to Siberia.<sup>69</sup> It remained to wait for Chaikovskii's reply and to see if Astrov would be willing to attach his name to the Directory. For that, the news had to reach South Russia. For the time being, then, the weakened Directory was alone, hoping to receive some political credibility by gaining the approval of those who had not been involved in its formation.

Other immediate practical considerations of an administrative nature had to be decided. First of all, before any steps were taken, a governmental apparatus needed to be put in place. In order to achieve this, the Directory needed to decide where it would reside. Boldyrev, for example, felt that there was little political work the Directory could do in this early stage. Lacking internal cohesion due to the absence of so many full members and isolated from the masses, this 'creation of the intelligentsia' could not summon immediate, general loyalty. The general concentrated instead on organising the armed forces that were, or should have been, at his disposal as commander-in-chief.<sup>70</sup> While Boldyrev did what little he could to begin organising the armed forces, others turned to the most important decision the Directory would

<sup>69</sup> Hoover Institution, Harris Collection, Box 3. The telegram to Chaikovskii was sent via American consulates in Irkutsk, then on to Vladivostok, and then to Arkhangel'sk, on 19 September.

<sup>70</sup> The Czechoslovak army, which was loyal to the Directory in the main, was considered by all to be an interventionist force and had to be integrated into Boldyrev's command. At a meeting with Czech General Diterichs, Boldyrev succeeded in subordinating the Czechoslovaks to his command. With many other considerations to work on, such as the bringing into line of the Siberian Army and also the People's Army of Komuch, with which relations were also poor, Boldyrev divided the front into four sections: Saratov to Ural'sk; Syzran to Samara; Kazan to Bugul'ma; and Perm to Ekaterinburg. See Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, pp. 54–59.



make: the choice of the new capital of anti-Bolshevik Russia. There were few choices. Samara was out of the question, as it was too close to the front. The UR probably would not have wanted to choose the seat of Komuch in any case, as it would be so difficult to persuade the PSG to remain involved. Apart from Omsk, the only real choices were Cheliabinsk and Ekaterinburg, both of which were at least reasonably neutral ground with respect to the PSG and the SRs. Krol, who had discussed the suitability of the capital of the Urals as a future seat for the all-Russian government with other UR members in July, spoke with Avksent'ev and Boldyrev but did not receive the positive response he hoped for from the Directory leaders, who remained circumspect. Ekaterinburg had against it the fact that it was fairly close to the front, although Krol thought there was little threat to his hometown. Of course, another factor was that Avksent'ev and Boldyrev were very concerned about the prospect of building a governmental apparatus from nothing at a time of great emergency. In this respect, Omsk was a far more suitable choice, as it had a governmental system-in-waiting. Nevertheless, Krol decided to push for Ekaterinburg until he heard a firm 'no'.<sup>71</sup>

Unfortunately, just as the Directory needed to focus on these practical matters of setting itself up as a government, the news came of the events in Omsk of the previous days. The Novoselov murder was the first big headache for the Directory, and with it came the question: what to do about Mikhailov? All suspected the by now notorious Siberian minister of involvement in the outrage and the Czechoslovaks were demanding the right formally to arrest him. This was an unwanted early test for Avksent'ev. A heavy-handed approach could open up a serious and potentially fatal collision with the PSG. However, if the Directory did not act resolutely, then it risked losing credibility in the eyes of the Czechoslovak Legion, all political parties and anyone in public life (as well as in the eyes of the PSG itself, which would see that the new government was manifestly powerless). The government and many senior figures close to the Directory and the PSG, such as Krol and Ivanov-Rinov, debated the issue in Ufa for the whole of 24 September. According to Guins, the advice of Serebrennikov on the broad support enjoyed by the PSG among many circles, particularly those near Omsk, persuaded the Directory not to begin its life with a conflict. Of key importance was the fact that Boldyrev did not want to use

<sup>71</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 135.



Czechoslovaks against Russians, and did not want the Directory to be dependent upon foreigners.<sup>72</sup> Finally, it was decided to send Argunov to Omsk to fully investigate the affair. Until his findings were known, nothing was to be done. This essentially meant that Mikhailov was a free man. However, his position was far from certain. This decision by the Directory was surely one of tactics. The fact was that, at that time, it was a powerless institution. The Czechoslovaks would have been able to successfully detain Mikhailov, but there was no way that the All-Russian Government would be able to contain the reactions of the Omsk clique of which Mikhailov was without a doubt the head. An all-out war with the conservative forces of Western Siberia was one which the Directory simply could not win.

As there was much uncertainty over the future power arrangement, most leading figures remained in Ufa to discuss the key issues. A delegation of the Urals Government was sent to Ufa from Ekaterinburg to bolster support for their capital as the seat of the Directory, prompting Krol to lengthen his stay at the Hotel Siberia.<sup>73</sup> The Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly opened on 26 September as a 'controlling body'. The Congress was intended as a means of asserting SR influence over the Directory and to assert the primacy of the Constituent Assembly. In this transitional phase, only those on hand would have any influence over the decision-making. Despite the determination of those Komuch members present in Ufa to maintain their position, and perhaps claw back some of the concessions entered into at the conference, the mood of the Congress was gloomy. Vedeniapin had said that the day of the birth of the Directory was the day of Komuch's death, and by the opening of the Congress, it seems many of his fellow deputies agreed with him. Maiskii later recalled that on the opening day, despite the efforts of 'Avksent'ev and co.', all felt that a 'fatal mistake' had been made, as the new government had no apparatus, no ministers, no firm will and no thought-out programme.<sup>74</sup> The gloom continued for the SRs on 29 September. The Council of Directors, Komuch's cabinet, met under the chairmanship of Vol'skii under great pressure. The Ufa State Conference provided no role for Komuch, which had initially seen itself as the main source of democratic opposition to the Bolsheviks. In addition, Samara was close to being taken by the Red Army. There was little choice other than to liquidate Komuch and hope that the newly

<sup>72</sup> Guins, *Sibir'*, pp. 247–248; Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, p. 51; Argunov, *Mezhdudvumia bol'shevizmami*, pp. 22–26.

<sup>73</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 136.

<sup>74</sup> Maiskii, *Demokraticheskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, pp. 247, 261–262.



formed Congress would stay close to the Directory and enforce some of the democratic principles of Komuch upon the new government.

In the first few days of October, then, it must have been apparent to all that the PSR was in further decline. As the preparations were being made to evacuate Samara (which was finally abandoned by the former members of Komuch on 6 October), the Directory was debating where to base itself. Krol was asked to assist the Directory in making this monumental decision. This may have been an attempt by Avksent'ev and Zenzinov to steer the debate in favour of Ekaterinburg, as, according to Boldyrev, they both favoured the Urals capital.<sup>75</sup> In any case, there was some debate over whether Ekaterinburg could act as a functioning capital. Sapozhnikov, who was understandably pressing strongly for the Directory to select Omsk, cast doubt over whether Ekaterinburg could provide the necessary institutional support for a government with national pretensions. The Directory asked Krol if his town had sufficient personnel and 'apparatus', to which he replied that Ekaterinburg was rich in cultural and intellectual forces. The debate continued for a number of days, with Boldyrev perhaps siding somewhat with Sapozhnikov because Ekaterinburg was too close to the front. He suggested basing the military command in the Urals, but housing the government safely behind the lines in Siberia. However, the Directory was close to opting to grant Krol his wish, and from 30 September he was busy in Ekaterinburg making preparations for the arrival of the All-Russian Government, requisitioning buildings and keeping in regular contact with Ufa by direct wire. At this point, according to Krol, all organisations and parties in and around the town were 'warm' to the Directory and the prospects for a Urals-based All-Russian government, as planned in July, were very optimistic.<sup>76</sup>

However, on 3 October, the Directory met and decided to name Omsk as the new capital. It is unclear who, apart from the five Directory members, took part in this meeting, and whether any threats were involved. The case was most certainly made for Omsk by Sapozhnikov, who pointed out that there was in effect a governmental system-in-waiting for the Directory to make use of. Were any other points made? It appears that reports from Omsk by Argunov may have influenced the Directory. The details of Argunov's investigation into the Novoselov murder are unclear, as the documents were later destroyed. However, although Argunov later claimed that he

<sup>75</sup> Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, p. 63.

<sup>76</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 139–140.



saw the Administrative Council as being of 'the old regime' and 'anti-democratic', and that his evidence showed the involvement of Mikhailov, he may not have taken a position that was consistently critical of the PSG.<sup>77</sup> S. P. Mel'gunov claimed that Argunov sent a report to the Directory at the time of his investigation that Siberia was a 'businesslike, intelligent and state-minded region', and that if anyone was causing problems, it was the local representatives of the PSR. This led Avksent'ev to rather indiscreetly say, according to Sviatinskii, that Novoselov 'should have been shot a long time ago'.<sup>78</sup> Avksent'ev (although he had initially favoured Ekaterinburg) had, after several days deliberation, come to the conclusion that the Directory was more likely to achieve success by moving to Omsk and usurping the PSG by virtue of its mandate, created at Ufa, to demand the subordination of all regional governments. He appears to have believed that force could not be used to remove the PSG and that a tactic of 'enveloping' the government would suffice. What this meant was that the Directory, in creating its Council of Ministers, would nominate the most democratically-minded members of the PSG to it, and by adjusting the governmental apparatus (how is unclear), 'destroy the capacity to resist of the Siberian government'.<sup>79</sup>

The Siberian Army, of which Boldyrev was certainly keen to take firm control, was far away from the front. Would it have come to the aid of a besieged government, if the Red Army advanced closer to Ekaterinburg? Perhaps a veiled threat along these lines was made at the meeting of 3 October, for the decision to head for Omsk was a sudden change of direction, and the news of it came to Krol like 'a bolt from the blue'. The disappointed Kadet was told by Avksent'ev that the Directory 'had no choice', and Krol himself later understood that the forces in Omsk would have given Ekaterinburg to the Bolsheviks, Directory and all.<sup>80</sup> The result of this was that the moderate forces in Ekaterinburg, which had been favourable in their attitude to the Directory, changed their mind. Krol himself saw that it was weak-willed, and as those around him began to panic about the closeness of their home town to the front, it must have seemed to them that the Directory had made a decision to abandon democratic

<sup>77</sup> Argunov, *Mezhdru dvumia bol'shevizmami*, pp. 22–26.

<sup>78</sup> Mel'gunov, *Tragediia Admirala Kolchaka*, Vol. II, pp. 10–11. Unfortunately, Mel'gunov provided no clear source for Sviatinskii's remark.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 16–19.

<sup>80</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 137–140; Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, pp. 52, 63; Guins, *Sibir*, p. 263. Serebrennikov also said that the decision to move to Ekaterinburg was cancelled because the town was not considered safe. See 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stvo', p. 16.



principles and attempt to form some sort of *modus vivendi* with the Administrative Council of the PSG.<sup>81</sup> The Directory was also leaving behind the Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly, which had planned to shadow the new government closely, and would soon make its outrage clear. The mood of the SR members of the Directory was pessimistic. Their decision was one taken in recognition that real power in anti-Bolshevik Russia lay in Omsk and that if the Directory was to have any meaning, it would have to hope that it could overcome whatever opposition it found in the town known in the wake of the Novoselov murder as the 'citadel of reaction', where Mikhailov, who had complete control of the Administrative Council, was operating with virtually dictatorial powers.<sup>82</sup>

### *Dual Power in Omsk*

Serebrennikov arrived at Omsk a few days prior to his fellow Directors. The mood was anxious, as it was unclear what would happen as a result of the creation of the Directory. All that was clear was that the Siberians felt that this all-Russian government was being foisted upon them against the will of the majority. Granted, the Directory had prevented the Czechoslovaks from completing a coup against the Administrative Council, but there was much concern over Siberia being used as a resource by European Russians whose only concern was the liberation of their own homeland from Bolshevism. The 'Siberian Directory', as Serebrennikov termed it, was only two-strong, as the dismissed Shatilov and Krutovskii were keeping their distance, and Vologodskii had not yet returned from the Far East. With talk of a rail strike to prevent the movement of Siberian troops to the Urals revealing the mood in Omsk to be on the whole indignantly regionalist and almost anti-Russian, the weakened PSG adopted 'temporary' tactics. Until Vologodskii returned, no major decisions regarding the future power arrangement would be made. However, the Directory had named S. S. Starynkevich as Minister of Justice and Sapozhnikov as Minister of Education for the All-Russian Government. Thus, when the Directory arrived in Omsk on the morning of 9 October, there were two ministers of justice in the same town. The Directory, which was met without any special ceremony by

<sup>81</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 140.

<sup>82</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, pp. 262, 264.

Ivanov-Rinov, Iakushev and Serebrennikov, faced an uncomfortable situation. Forced to reside, for an unspecified time, in railway carriages at the station, Avksent'ev, Vinogradov, Zenzinov and Boldyrev had moved into a territory that already had a government and that would resist any attempt to usurp that authority.

In fact, the Directory was impotent at this point. The whole point of moving to Omsk, as far as the UR members of the Directory were concerned, was to make use of the governmental system of the PSG, yet even this was made difficult. In the talks held between the Directory and the PSG, Avksent'ev and Zenzinov (who were without a doubt the enemy as far as the Siberians were concerned) heard 'a few unpleasant words' regarding the local mistrust of the PSR and the fact that the Directory was considered to be powerless.<sup>83</sup> This added insult to the injury of being forced to accept that Mikhailov, the man suspected of being behind the Novoselov affair, was one of the key figures they would be doing business with. The Directory also had difficulties in achieving any progress with the investigation into the Novoselov murder. Avksent'ev heard Argunov's report on the afternoon of his arrival, the veteran SR being very pessimistic in tone and opining that 'The Directory's hand is very weak.' Colonel V. I. Volkov, the prime suspect in the affair, had been implicated in Argunov's report. However, rather than allow Volkov to answer any charges or questioning, the Siberian commander-in-chief, Ivanov-Rinov, had sent Volkov on a mission to the Far East (evidently to protect him). Boldyrev ordered the return of Volkov to Omsk, yet this was ignored. Instead, Boldyev received a reply from Ivanov-Rinov on 13 October that the commander-in-chief had conducted his own investigation and that Volkov was innocent. Here was a none-too-subtle example of the contempt with which the Siberians treated the authority of the new arrivals. Isolated from all support and surrounded by unfriendly military units, the Directory was unable to act with any force to prevent the investigation being smothered in this way.

The Directory was dependent upon the readiness of the PSG to enter into talks on the new Council of Ministers. As Serebrennikov and Mikhailov would do nothing without Vologodskii, everything awaited his return. Thus, for almost a week (between 12 October and 18 October), there was nothing the Directory could do. At this point, it would be wrong even to speak of the Directory as a regime. There was no regime.

<sup>83</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stvo', p. 16.



The PSG, which had been boiled down by the machinations of Mikhailov to the Administrative Council, was the only functioning body, which at this point, according to Guins, gave the Minister of Finance almost dictatorial powers.<sup>84</sup> Boldyrev was the only Director able to take any positive action, attempting to take some control over the army, and some contacts were made those who may have been friendly toward the new formation and provide some assistance with military planning. Contact was made, for example, with a representative of General Poole and a plan was formed to advance troops from the section of the front that included Ekaterinburg to Viatka and attack. From there, in a reprisal of Boldyrev's plans of the previous spring, a link might be made with General Poole's forces which intended to take Kotlas.<sup>85</sup> There was, however, little governmental activity to speak of. The PSG essentially continued to govern Siberia.

On 10 October, Avksent'ev received the first telegram from Chaikovskii (sent via US embassies and consulates) in response to the news of the formation of the Directory. It informed the Directory chairman of the coup in Arkhangel'sk, which was euphemistically termed a 'transformation' of the government, which Chaikovskii said was still under his chairmanship. At this time, then, Chaikovskii had not yet received the telegram informing him that he had been elected to the Directory. It was to be over three weeks before a more detailed reply was received from Chaikovskii, which recognised the All-Russian Government at Omsk and indicated the UR leader's readiness to submit to its authority. There was no mention of the possibility of Chaikovskii moving to Omsk to actually accept his post in the government. However, there was a request for the details of the composition and organisation of the new government, together with a blatant hint that the Northern Oblast needed money and that the creation of an all-Russian government was considered in Arkhangel'sk primarily as a new source of funds.<sup>86</sup> It would appear from this correspondence that Chaikovskii was adopting a cautious approach to the Ufa State Conference and the Directory. If the Directory was to succeed in establishing itself, it would have to do so without him.

If Avksent'ev and Zenzinov were not to be helped by their UR counterparts in North Russia, the ever-dependable Urals contingent continued to make an effort. The

<sup>84</sup> Guins, *Sibir'*, p. 264.

<sup>85</sup> Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, p. 73.

<sup>86</sup> Hoover Institution, Mel'gunov Collection, Box 13, File 18.

leaders of the Urals Government arrived in Omsk on 13 October, and were shocked with what they found. The Directory was hardly in evidence at all. Lev Krol's memoirs of his arrival paint a picture of a town in stasis. After the storm of the Novoselov affair, there was an uneasy quiet, with little for the political classes to engage in than vaguely morbid gossip. At the Omsk Commercial Club, where many chose to dine and exchange rumours, Krol overheard speculations regarding the readiness of the Czechoslovaks to act against the PSG, together with much that was unflattering to the Directory. Omsk had become a town starved of political action, the atmosphere of impending doom made all the worse by the rumours circulating around. This is perfectly illustrated by a chance meeting between Boldyrev and Serebrennikov. Bumping into the general one morning in mid- to late-October, Serebrennikov said, 'You know, we live in a kind of Mexico...yesterday, rumours spread that the Russian government intended to arrest us.' Boldyrev replied simply that the rumours were not true, and that, 'We heard the opposite – after three days in power we heard rumours that the Siberian government intended to arrest us.'<sup>87</sup>

The Directory itself was something that Krol had some difficulty in even locating on his arrival in Omsk. It was important for representatives of the regional governments to encourage the Directory to quickly address the issue of money to the regional governments which were now ready to submit to it and transform themselves into branches of semi-devolved local administration. The Directory was responsible for managing the financial relations between those branches, and of grave concern to Krol and his party was the fact that the PSG owed Urals-based banks and factories several million rubles. The Directors were, of course, in their railway carriages and, before successfully locating Avksent'ev, Krol met men such as Brushvit and Argunov who were both very downcast in their mood regarding the prospects for the Directory.<sup>88</sup> The presence of the Directory was almost unnoticeable compared to that of gangs of Cossacks and men dressed in military uniform, who harked back to the pre-revolutionary era with their use of epaulettes, their brutish behaviour and their overt monarchism and open hatred of all that was Socialist-Revolutionary, which appears to have extended as far as a plan by an officer organisation calling itself 'The

<sup>87</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stvo', p. 19. Boldyrev also made note in his diary of rumours of an impending coup 'in pure Mexican style'. See *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, p. 76.

<sup>88</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 142–143.



Mikhailovskii Hunting and Fishing Society' to capture and eliminate SR Constituent Assembly deputies.<sup>89</sup>

Was there any way out of this situation for the Directory? When Krol met Avksent'ev on 14 October, the weary leader of the UR explained that the only option (other than that of attempting to co-exist and negotiate with the PSG) was to use the Czechoslovaks. There were varying degrees to which this could be done, of course. The Czechoslovaks could arrest key figures, such as Mikhailov, and be used to prevent much of the activity of Cossacks around the clubs of Omsk. Buildings could be forcibly requisitioned and placed at the disposal of the Directory. Or, more subtle pressure could be applied, by using the threat of the Czechoslovaks to extract better treatment from the Siberians and ensure that any negotiations were resolved to the Directory's liking. That the Directory, and particularly Avksent'ev, did not make use of this resource, set the tone for the events of October and November 1918 in Omsk and this should be addressed. Given that the UR leadership did not allow modesty to prevent them from taking up such important posts in the all-Russian government, should it not therefore have defended itself with the purpose it had shown in achieving the creation of that government? The reluctance of Avksent'ev and Boldyrev has memorably been described as having been due to 'an almost Hamlet-like paralysis of the will' in one recent account of these events.<sup>90</sup> However, this suggests that there is no real explanation, when in fact the motives of each man can be traced.

As has previously been stated, Boldyrev saw the Czechoslovaks as an interventionist force and did not want them to be used. The transformation of the civil war into an exclusively Russian affair was probably a higher priority in the mind of the general than the composition of the Council of Ministers, for example.<sup>91</sup> As regards Avksent'ev, as well as Zenzinov (who can be regarded here as Avksent'ev's junior partner), the issue was one of principle, and involved the kind of misguided ethics of the Provisional Government of 1917, as the UR leaders attempted to put as much distance as possible between their band of socialist parliamentarianism and the socialism of Lenin. The thoughts of Avksent'ev on this subject were revealed to Krol when the two met on 14 October. Avksent'ev was much concerned with the Omsk Bloc, a group of thirteen political and business organisations which had sent

<sup>89</sup> See Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 80–84.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>91</sup> See above, p. 165.

representations to the Directory regarding the power arrangement in Omsk and the need for the Administrative Council (meaning Mikhailov) to be consulted on all appointments and decisions. Avksent'ev understood that the Directory faced a straight choice between either adopting a weak stance and find a way of making an agreement with the Administrative Council, or making some use of the Czechoslovaks to force a more favourable situation. However, the latter tactic was unacceptable to the SR, who did not want the All-Russian Government to be supported, as the Bolshevik regime was widely condemned as having been, by a small but powerful and committed force of non-Russians: 'I do not wish to have my own Latvians', Avksent'ev said, in a statement which made it clear that the Directory would rely upon words alone to get its way.<sup>92</sup>

Avksent'ev had agreed on 12 October to a compromise with the PSG to cover the transitional period. This was, in summary:

- 1) All regional governments to be 'provisionally' abolished and the Sibobduma closed.
- 2) Until the return of Vologodskii, the Administrative Council to be used 'as it was'.
- 3) The first Cabinet of Ministers to be agreed between the Directory and the PSG.
- 4) The President of the Cabinet of Ministers to be named by the Directory, and to be one of the Directors. This was to be Vologodskii, his deputy to be drawn from the Cabinet.
- 5) Siberia to be granted a regional representative organ, the details of which were to be worked out by the Directory.
- 6) PSG laws to remain in force.

<sup>92</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 144.



- 7) The army to be united but organised along territorial lines, with national units to march under national colours (for example, the white and green flag for Siberian units).<sup>93</sup>

The significance of this agreement should not be underestimated, although Avksent'ev and Zenzinov appear to have done so.<sup>94</sup> Essentially, the Siberians had been given everything they wanted. Any 'all-Russian' aspect of the regime was cosmetic. The Siberian Army would continue to exist as a subsection of Boldyrev's forces and in practice would continue to defend Siberian interests, which meant that the PSG would have stronger military support than the Directory, as a consequence of Avksent'ev's reluctance to make use of the Czechoslovaks. All other regional governments would, under this arrangement, be placed under much more pressure to dissolve themselves than the PSG, and the Sibobduma was to be forced to close. From this standpoint, the Directory was fast becoming a means by which the PSG could transform itself into an all-Russian government. This 'dual power' arrangement had grave implications for the Directory, not only in terms of its relations with the PSG, but also with regard to other forces with which it should have been in collaboration – particularly the group of SRs resident in Ufa (most of which had been Komuch members) which by mid-October had been augmented by the party leader, Viktor Chernov. That the Directory was now dangerously close to the PSG at the expense of its relations with others was made clear to those outside of Omsk by the difficulties experienced in obtaining any financial assistance from the new capital.

Throughout October, the forces defending towns close to the Urals, such as those under Colonel Shchepikhin at Ufa, were struggling for supplies, and there were severe monetary demands being made on the Directory. Zenzinov, who handled relations with the Ufa SRs, had many conversations on the direct wire with Vedeniapin, Filipovskii, Znamenskii and others regarding the issue of millions of rubles. Although several million were issued to Ufa, the SRs received nowhere near the 200 million they needed to continue supplying the units at the front that had been Komuch's People's Army; and the Directory, which was dependent upon the Siberian

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>94</sup> G. K. Guins's memoir of the discussions between the Directory and the PSG reveal that Avksent'ev saw the agreement as a temporary and that the Administrative Council could be obfuscated once Vologodskii was in Omsk. He also claims Zenzinov saw the Council as a 'plaything'.



Ministry of Finance, could do little to help – in fact, the attitude displayed by Zenzinov and Boldyrev in these discussions showed that they were neither willing nor able to go to Mikhailov with a request for money for the SRs. Similarly, Ekaterinburg was in the middle of a bread crisis, which Krol attempted to remedy by petitioning fellow Kadet Vinogradov for financial assistance. The liberal Director achieved nothing more than an empty promise from Mikhailov for money that never fully materialised.<sup>95</sup> It was unfortunate for those to the west of Siberia that the individual who was in control of the purse strings was one of those who wished them the most harm. The PSG was in a position of great power here, as it could easily withhold the issuing of funds. This gave the Siberians an extra card at the negotiating table with the Directory, which could little afford to make any further demands until the wrangling over the appointment of the Cabinet of Ministers was over.<sup>96</sup>

The appalling, frustrating situation in which the Directory thus found itself depressed Avksent'ev and Zenzinov greatly. They had no friends in Omsk and were at the mercy of the Administrative Council. Unlike Vinogradov (whose status as a member of the Kadet party gave him connections, however weak, in Siberia) and Boldyrev (who could busy himself with military tasks and who, as a general, was assured of a certain degree of respect) there was no institutional support for the two SRs, whose relations with their own party were strained to say the least. Feeling isolated from the other three Directors and unwelcome in Omsk society, which they were sure would gladly accept a three-man Directory of Boldyrev, Vinogradov and Vologodskii, the two SRs spoke about resigning their posts in an attempt to save the All-Russian Government. It is not clear how seriously this threat was intended to be taken. In fact, the only protest came from Vinogradov, who made it clear that if the two SRs did leave, he would too.<sup>97</sup> It is interesting to note that Boldyrev made no such response, and in fact this incident is not recorded in his diary of the period as reproduced in his memoirs, although he did mention that Avksent'ev was anxious.<sup>98</sup> It is likely, then, that the possibility of the exit of the SR Directors was not made known to the general and that this was a fairly small affair. Regardless, the position of

<sup>95</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 22; Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 146–147.

<sup>96</sup> Argunov, who spoke with Mikhailov on this matter on behalf of the SRs, makes it clear that Mikhailov was in fact using the issue of money as leverage to force the transfer of the Imperial gold reserve, which had been in the hands of Komuch after Kazan had been taken from the Bolsheviks, to Omsk. See *Mezhdu dvumia bol'shevizmami*, p. 32.

<sup>97</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 148.

<sup>98</sup> Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak Interventy*, pp. 75–76.



Vinogradov was sufficient to prevent any further talk of resignation. Avksent'ev and Zenzinov were forced to place what little hope they had for the future of the All-Russian Government in the return of Vologodskii to Omsk and the possibility of assistance from the allies.

### *Vologodskii Returns*

The Prime Minister of the PSG returned to his capital early in the morning of 18 October, although he did not see fit to meet with his fellow Directory members until the following day, after he had met with his Siberian ministers. There was no quick-fix agreement between the SR Directors and their Siberian counterpart with regard to the Administrative Council and, in fact, it took another week before Vologodskii added his name to the Act on the Formation of Power worked out at Ufa, having refused to swear an oath as a member of the Directory on 19 October.<sup>99</sup>

That the return of Vologodskii was of little help to the ailing Directory was soon clear to the UR Directory members. One week after the return of the Siberian leader to Omsk, Avksent'ev described him to Ivan Maiskii as 'simply a spy for the Siberian government inside the Directory'.<sup>100</sup> There was only one immediate benefit felt by the Directory as a result of Vologodskii's return, as the All-Russian Government was now provided with its own poorly-heated two-storey building near to the station, and was no longer forced to reside in railway carriages.<sup>101</sup> This, at least, meant that the Directory was not embarrassed in front of General Alfred Knox, who arrived in Omsk at the head of the British Military Mission on 21 October. Knox was Britain's foremost expert on Russian military affairs and frequently took part in War Cabinet meetings when in London. It was to the advantage of the Directory that Boldyrev was known to Knox and that the two held meetings over breakfast most days at this time. Knox and most other senior members of the British mission (including Colonel Nielsen, Captain Steveni and Lieutenant Cunningham) were highly sceptical about the Directory. Having set up a headquarters in special railway

<sup>99</sup> Lyandres and Wulff (eds), *A Chronicle of the Civil War*, p. 159 (diary entries for 18 and 19 October); Vologodskii's utter indifference to the Directory has been made clear before in Berk, 'Coup d'État of Admiral Kolchak', pp. 410–412.

<sup>100</sup> Maiskii, *Demokraticheskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 310.

<sup>101</sup> Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, p. 78; Maiskii, *Demokraticheskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 301.

carriages, they lived, according to one Russian officer attached to the Stavka, 'as though in the colonies', remaining fully detached from the government and in extreme comfort. Knox and his staff met frequently with representatives of Omsk society, including representatives of the Kadet Party such as V. A. Zhardetskii, who was very critical of the Directory, and later V. N. Pepeliaev, who was even more hostile. Knox also gauged the opinion of local officers, the majority of whom were not even in favour of the Kadet party, particularly the Cossacks.<sup>102</sup> It seems all those whose opinion was of consequence to the British were waiting for the day the Directory would be replaced by a dictator.

General Knox must have also noted that the Directory was unable to force the pace of the negotiations over the Council of Ministers. Early on, it was established that the full Directory would meet with prominent members of the PSG such as Mikhailov, Serebrennikov and Guins, as well as, of course, Vologodskii, who was entrusted with leading what was a hard-line Siberian approach to the talks. Such meetings took place daily for two weeks. There were essentially three stumbling blocks to an agreement on the formation of a Council of Ministers. These were the closure of the Sibobduma and the candidacy of both Mikhailov and E. Rogovskii. The difference in opinion over what should, according to the Act on the Formation of Power, have been a formality for the Directory, made the talks no less than (to use Serebrennikov's words) 'a struggle for power...comparable to the worst days of the Ufa State Conference'.<sup>103</sup> Vologodskii's place alongside Avksent'ev, Zenzinov and the more neutral Boldyrev and Vinogradov gave the PSG legitimacy in delaying the negotiations and using the creation of the Council of Ministers as a platform essentially to renegotiate the Ufa accord. What is clear from memoirs of the period is that those on all sides were not sure if this renegotiation would result in a swing to the right or to the left.

Maiskii, for example, arrived in Omsk on 18 October, to discuss his own nomination as Minister of Labour. This had been discussed after the Ufa State Conference when it was thought the government might base itself in Ekaterinburg, where the Menshevik had been requested to report in a telegram from conference

<sup>102</sup> Il'in, P. S. 'Omsk, Direktoriia, Kolchak', *Novyi zhurnal* (New York) Vol. 72 (1963), pp. 198–217 (hereafter 'Omsk, Direktoriia'), pp. 201–204.

<sup>103</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stvo', p. 17.



secretary Kruglikov dated 2 October.<sup>104</sup> The decision of the Directory to move to Omsk had not deterred Maiskii, who (as a Menshevik as well as a former Komuch minister) could have provided the Directory with a great deal of credibility with the left, as well as much-needed governmental experience. On his arrival Maiskii quickly noted the change in Omsk since his previous visit in pre-revolutionary times. Once a dull, lifeless town, devoid of culture and political life, Omsk was now taken over by groups and parties of all kinds. Political discussion was audible on the streets, and many buildings were now displaying signs proclaiming them to be the property of the PSR, the Kadets, and even the Mensheviks. On meeting with Zenzinov, however, Maiskii learned that the situation was far less positive than he had hoped. The Directory was being treated, he heard, as an 'unwelcome guest'. It had lived for a week in a railway carriage and was only moved after Boldyrev had demanded to be treated with respect. Not only that, but any time any Directory member wished to speak with those in Ufa or Ekaterinburg on the direct wire, they were forced to make a request to the PSG Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs! Avksent'ev and Zenzinov felt that they were in the camp of the enemy, and although they would both support the candidacy of the Menshevik as Minister of Labour, they felt powerless to make any promises.<sup>105</sup>

### *Isolation from the Right*

If the Directory was to wield any power in these crucial negotiations over the composition of the Council of Ministers, it needed support from the kind of middle-ground political activists that had joined the UR and the National Centre as an alternative to party dogma earlier in the year. The *raison d'être* of the political underground in Moscow was to accept that cross-party consensus was necessary to build a political platform that could unify the anti-Bolshevik camp and provide an acceptable alternative for the peasants of Siberia, the Volga, the Don and the Kuban as well as the workers who dominated the political scene in Moscow and Petrograd. One vital source of support was the National Centre, whose members had on the whole headed for South Russia and had, during the summer of 1918, split into two groups: those who had taken on the pro-German stance of Miliukov and followed the

<sup>104</sup> Maiskii, *Demokraticheskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 287.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 300–305.

Kadet party leader to Kiev, and those who had, in opposition to this, attached themselves alongside a few UR members to the avowedly pro-Allied Volunteer Army of General Alekseev.<sup>106</sup> By September, although Miliukov had given up hope for a restoration sponsored by the Kaiser, he remained a monarchist and opposed any notion of a coalition directory. In the aftermath of the death of General Alekseev in late October, which had placed power in South Russia securely in the hands of General Denikin, Nikolai Astrov, the leading light of the National Centre, travelled to Ekaterinodar, the centre of the Volunteer Army, for a regional conference.

Far from 'going native' in South Russia and becoming absorbed in the militaristic regime, Astrov remained true to his agreement with the UR and spoke in favour of a Directory in principle at a regional conference of Kadet Central Committee members held at the dacha of party veteran I. I. Petrunkevich in Haspra, close to Yalta, on 2 October. The conference debated the strategy of Kadets at a time when all agreed that it was essential to extract as much aid and intervention from the allies as possible. Leading Kadets (including V. D. Nabokov, M. M. Vinaver, and G. N. Trubetskoi) spoke of the necessity of creating some unity between the Volunteer Army and the Ufa Directory, in order to persuade the Allies that the anti-Bolshevik movement was not split, as it currently was, between the south and the east. It appears that Astrov had not yet been informed of his election to the Directory.<sup>107</sup> Shortly afterwards, at a conference with Denikin in Ekaterinodar, Astrov attempted to persuade the general that the Volunteer Army should at least have a relationship with this new government. It was only at this time that Astrov learned that a Directory had been elected, and that he was in it.<sup>108</sup>

The news the Directory consisted of five men and not three put an end to Astrov's arguments for this most modest attempt at some cross-party involvement in the running of the civil war. Denikin was already firmly on the road to being seen as dictator in the South, with a new 'Special Council' of advisors to support him.<sup>109</sup> A

<sup>106</sup> For more detail, see below, pp. 195–199.

<sup>107</sup> *Protokoly Ts. K. K-D Partii*, pp. 462–468.

<sup>108</sup> Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, pp. 152–155; Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, pp. 327–329.

<sup>109</sup> The recently written constitution of the Volunteer Army placed the Supreme Commander of the Army as leader of the movement. This had originally been intended to be General Alekseev, of course, although the ailing leader had named Denikin as Commander of the Army. Four days after the death of Alekseev on 8 October, Denikin changed his title to Supreme Commander of the Army, meaning that under the terms of the constitution, he now wielded supreme authority, his title used as a synonym for dictator. Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia*, p. 195.



Kadet conference on 28 October confirmed this, with Astrov, who had adopted a new position, leading the way and ensuring that Denikin would receive the full backing of local Kadets. He had also made the decision to enter Denikin's Special Council as an advisor without any portfolio. By mid- to late-October, then, Astrov believed that the agreement between the National Centre and the UR had been broken. There can be no doubt that this was something of a bombshell, and a bombshell which he was quick to return: Astrov refused point-blank to accept his post as a member of the Directory. In an announcement, the Kadet made it clear that he had entered into an agreement with the UR. However, the agreement had been breached on all of its most crucial points at Ufa. Astrov categorically maintained that the Constituent Assembly, which in theory was the highest authority in the land, was considered to have been elected under distorting circumstances and was not to have any power until a new body was elected *after* the defeat of the Red Army. Astrov could not accept the agreement made at Ufa over the 1917 body and went on to state, 'I, with the utmost determination reject any thought of the possibility of appearing in a government which stands dependent on the old, even non-existent Constituent Assembly.' As regards the Directory, he could not see it as the supreme authority in Russia: 'In the present conditions this is only one of the establishments on the difficult and long road to unite Russia, this is only part of the complicated process in the formation of a general state and all-Russian power.'<sup>110</sup>

Whether Astrov had any inkling of the damage he was inflicting upon the Directory by not taking up his post is unclear. Central Committee members were thin on the ground in Siberia, and any positive statements coming from Ekaterinodar would have been of enormous help. It is clear, though, from Astrov's statement, that no link, however nominal, was ever to be forged between Denikin's regime and the one born at Ufa. This allowed Siberian Kadets to formulate and conduct their own policy with regard to the All-Russian Government – and, in fact, their attitude was to reflect that shown by Astrov. As the debate over the Council of Ministers raged on during the latter half of October, the afore-mentioned leader of the Siberian Kadets, V. A. Zhardetskii, called a meeting of the Omsk Committee of the Kadet Party and

<sup>110</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 28, File 9, 'Beseda s N. I. Astrovym', pp. 1–3. It is not clear just whose *beseda* this was, although the document clearly dates from the time Astrov decided to refuse his post as Director. Astrov was not the only party to the Moscow agreement who saw the Ufa accord as a betrayal. Miakotin, a key figure in the origins of the UR, who was in South Russia at the time, wrote to Astrov in November, 'Today I read in the "Odessoi listok" your letter of refusal to appear in the Ufa Directory. I fully understand this refusal and cannot object to it. In Ufa there was definitely a breach of the Moscow agreement. In this question I stand in a position very close to yours.' Dumova, *Kadetskaia kontrrevoliutssia*, p. 175.



proclaimed it to be a regional central committee.<sup>111</sup> At this meeting, Zhardetskii spoke vehemently against the Directory despite the fact that it contained a Kadet. Vinogradov, in response to this move, met with this 'central committee' and, when the committee attempted to issue instructions to what Zhardetskii saw as a subordinate party member, he refused to acknowledge its authority. This move by the Siberian Kadets was quite calculating, if G. K. Guins is to be believed. According to Guins, Vinogradov, the after-thought Director who somehow made it into the Directory despite having little part to play in its creation, had rather more power than one might suppose. There was a cleavage in the Directory, whereby Avksent'ev and Zenzinov always voted together, leading Boldyrev to more often than not side with the Siberians. The resulting deadlock often left the wavering Kadet with the deciding vote.<sup>112</sup> Had Vinogradov caved into the pressure exerted on him by his fellow party members, his crucial role in the collegiate decision-making process would have been turned over to those who wanted to bring down the Directory and replace it with a dictator.

Of course, none of that mattered at a time when the Directory had no real power. The absence of any Kadet support for the Directory had potentially grave consequences, for the liberals were the only political party with any real credibility in Omsk apart from the regionalists. As the SRs in the Directory had such poor relations with Vologodskii and his followers, the enmity shown toward them by Zhardetskii's Kadets was all the more dangerous. In a 'unifying' meeting of local party members on 29 October, Zhardetskii rounded on those left-Kadets such as Krol and Vinogradov who were willing to work with the SRs. He reported 'in very sharp tones' that those Kadets who disagreed with the decisions of the local 'central committee' were in effect enemies, saying 'who is not with us is against us...our delegation to Ufa were party traitors'.<sup>113</sup> Although Krol was determined to debate the issues with Zhardetskii, this meeting made it clear that the local party was keen to be seen as being as much in favour of removing the Directory as the regionalists. In fact, Zhardetskii's actions suggest that he saw the end of the Directory was nigh and was attempting to involve

<sup>111</sup> This was the original meeting that spawned the Eastern Section of the Central Committee (or *VOTsK*, to give it its Russian abbreviation) which first met officially under the chairmanship of shady Central Committee member V. N. Pepeliaev on 9 November.

<sup>112</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, p. 261.

<sup>113</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 151.



himself as much as possible in that process in order to gain a share of the spoils for himself and his followers.

*Isolation from the Left: the 'Chernov Manifesto'*

Although the approval of some force from the centre or centre-right wing of Russian politics was of considerably more importance to the UR and the Directory, the PSR remained a vital ally (for Avksent'ev and Zenzinov in particular). The role of the 1917 Constituent Assembly, whose members were now gathering at Ufa, may have caused the UR numerous problems with the PSG, the Kadets, the military, trade and industry groups and other elements surrounding the Directory in Omsk, but it still could not be ignored. The Ufa accord may have encountered opposition in Omsk, but it must be remembered that as far as the members of the SR delegation to the State Conference were concerned, they too had given a great deal away; and it remained for them to persuade the party and the Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly to endorse it. The PSR had undergone a great deal of upheaval after the Ufa State Conference and had been in retreat in more ways than one – fleeing the Komuch capital of Samara for Ufa and then losing all political initiative when the Directory moved to Omsk, leaving the Congress far from the seat of power and strapped for cash. Viktor Chernov, the chief theorist and unchallenged leader of the PSR, had arrived in Samara at the time of the Ufa State Conference but had not attended it, or played any part in the negotiations. Nor, for that matter, had leading Komuch members such as Vol'skii and Brushvit. Vol'skii had led the left wing of the Komuch delegation but had been outmanoeuvred by Gendel'man, who had played a huge role in the compromises entered into by Komuch. By the time the PSR had gathered itself at Ufa, it had enough Central Committee members to create a quorum (eight of a total of twenty), now that Chernov and I. N. Rakitnikov were present. This rump Central Committee met in tandem with the Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly and decided to re-examine the agreements made by its comparatively lightweight Ufa delegation.

Chernov led the way in criticising the conduct of the party's Ufa delegation, which in effect meant criticising Gendel'man. He saw that the PSR had lost a great deal at Ufa and that the winners were the 'so-called Union of Regeneration'. Claiming

that the Directory was not democratic, but a 'five-man dictatorship' that had had no control over the political situation, Chernov claimed that Ufa had resulted only in 'adventure, careerism and atamanshchina'. He was helped by the fact that most SRs who had signed the 'Act on the Formation of Power' had done so reluctantly and by the fact that one SR who attended the conference, Chaikin, had refused to sign. Kogan-Bernstein, a Central Committee member who had attended the Ufa State Conference actually returned to Soviet Russia in protest, where he was later caught and executed. It was clear that many senior SRs were indeed unhappy with the outcome of the Ufa conference, and Chernov quickly gained the support of Rakitnikov, Chaikin, Burevoi, Rakov and (before too long) Vedeniapin, Fedorovich and N. N. Ivanov. Top of the agenda of the Central Committee meetings at this time, then, was what to do about the situation. Should the PSR support the Directory?<sup>114</sup>

The events of October turned the mood of Chernov's Central Committee from one of quiet dissatisfaction to open criticism and virtually direct opposition. Chernov and his followers had plenty to complain about: the choice of residency for the All-Russian Government, the refusal to utilise the Czechoslovak Legion or reform the military it was inheriting from Siberia, the lack of action against Mikhailov or Volkov and the way in which the Administrative Council was ruling Siberia without any attempt to involve the so-called 'All-Russian Government' were all legitimate points for the PSR to make. In fact, Chernov, in his later explanation of his actions, which did much to undermine the Directory, gave an interesting view on the political manoeuvrings of the UR, comparing the Ufa State Conference to the Moscow State Conference of August 1917. The creation of coalition and compromise for its own sake (no matter how weak the resulting power arrangement), the situation of mutual mistrust, where two sides in a political struggle consistently expected to be arrested by the other (as in the Kornilov Rebellion), and the preoccupation with high politics at the expense of tackling real issues of policy, reveal a situation that was in many ways analogous to that of just over a year before. Avksent'ev, in Chernov's view, had continued the politics of the 1917 Provisional Government into 1918 and the civil war and, to all intents and purposes, was proving to be the Kerensky of the anti-Bolshevik movement.<sup>115</sup> Many other reasons later given by Chernov for his decision to openly

<sup>114</sup> Hoover Institution, Nikolaevsky Collection, Box 10, File 4: Chernov, V. M. "Chernovskaia gramota" i Ufimskaia direktoriia' (hereafter "Chernovskaia gramota"), pp. 6–13.

<sup>115</sup> Hoover Institution, "Chernovskaia gramota", pp. 13–14, 16–24, 27–32.



criticise the Directory are anachronistic or misguided, such as the weakness shown by the Directory during the negotiations with the PSG concerning the creation of the Council of Ministers. However, it is difficult to argue with the SR leader for his judgement that, 'The Directory, with suicidal zeal, alienated all its allies: it in part formally disbanded and closed down, in part disorganised and [in part] demoralised all organisations on which it could lean.'<sup>116</sup>

This explains the attitude of the PSR (and, for that matter, the Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly) in mid-October. The Central Committee decided that it was necessary to adopt a resolution that remained loyal to the general position taken by the party at Ufa, and criticised the Directory for failing to make good on its obligations. On 22 October a letter on behalf of the Central Committee was circulated to party members, giving the new position and encouraging the formation of independent armed forces to protect Komuch and its successor based in Ufa. This letter became known as the 'Chernov Manifesto' and created a political storm that would prove to be one of the final nails in the coffin of the Directory when it became widely publicised in early November. By then, though, the Directory had all but committed suicide.<sup>117</sup>

#### *Abdication: The Formation of the Council of Ministers*

The Directory, of course, was unaware of just how weak its position was becoming and of how many potential allies it was losing during the negotiations with the Administrative Council over the creation of the Council of Ministers. What it was certain of by now was that, until the negotiations were finalised, the PSG would continue to rule in Siberia, and the Directory would not be a functioning government. The meetings between the two sides began on 21 October, and continued on most evenings for the next two weeks. The Siberians quickly made their position clear: if the PSG was to disband, the Sibobduma would have to be closed down first; Vologodskii should be the first chairman of the Council of Ministers, Admiral Kolchak, who had just arrived on the scene, was to be made Minister for War and there was to be a governmental post for Mikhailov; and Rogovskii, the SR nominee

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>117</sup> The text of the letter has been widely reproduced and is available in Dotsenko, *The Struggle for a Democracy*, pp. 154–157.



for the post of Minister of the Interior, was unacceptable, as an SR should not be in charge of policing the capital. The main problem for the UR members of the Directory was that it was necessary for the All-Russian Government to have some SR presence in order to balance that of 'bourgeois regionalists', or the support of the left would fall away completely. Mikhailov, the man who in the eyes of many had SR blood on his hands, could not be made a minister, or this would be seen as a climb down of dramatic proportions, particularly if this coincided with the closure of the Sibobduma. Mikhailov had conducted an open war against the Duma and the coincidence of two such events would appear to all as the Directory siding with the reactionary circles in Omsk against one of the very last vestiges of democracy in Siberia. The Directory, in other words, was suffering as a result of the hostility that had been built up during 1918 between the European Russians of the PSR and the Siberian regionalists. Although involvement in such a struggle was anathema to the Directory, which was created to unify the anti-Bolshevik camp and turn isolated pockets of resistance into a co-ordinated campaign, there was no way out. For the Siberians, it was easy to argue that the failure on the behalf of the Directory to act against the Duma would prove that the spectre of SR dogma was still a cause for concern, and that that the Directory would never enjoy support while it remained a tool of the PSR.<sup>118</sup>

As far as the debate regarding candidates for the portfolios was concerned, it would appear that many names were bandied about. The British mission certainly tried to influence matters. General Knox met Boldyrev on 23 October to suggest that Boris Savinkov should be made Minister for Foreign Affairs, a sign equally of the esteem which the renegade leader of the Iaroslavl uprising continued to command in London and of the lack of understanding the British had of the delicate political situation.<sup>119</sup> General Knox also backed the nomination of Admiral Kolchak, who since his arrival on 13 October, had been seen by the officers of the *stavka* as the new hope for the creation of firm power.<sup>120</sup> Curiously, perhaps, the Directory does not appear to have opposed the bringing in of Kolchak and, according to Serebrennikov, Avksent'ev 'particularly promoted it'.<sup>121</sup> Once again, the motivation of Avksent'ev

<sup>118</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, pp. 267–268; Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, pp. 79–82; Berk, 'Coup d'État of Admiral Kolchak', pp. 412–413.

<sup>119</sup> Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, p. 82. Serebrennikov later wrote that the Siberians also considered that Savinkov was 'too dangerous a man'. See 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stva', p. 19.

<sup>120</sup> Il'in, 'Omsk, direktoriia', p. 205; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, p. 96.

<sup>121</sup> Serebrennikov, 'Sibirskogo pravitel'stva', p. 19; Maiskii, *Demokraticheskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 320; Berk, 'Coup d'État of Admiral Kolchak', p. 413.



must come into question – it would appear that, having agreed to move to Omsk, the UR leader's tactic of 'enveloping' was taking precedent over all else. A snag here was that Kolchak refused to enter into a government in which an SR of Rogovskii's type held a major portfolio. This strengthened the hand of the Siberians and made the talks even more of a test of the resolve of the Directory: would it make such a rightward leap as to sacrifice Rogovskii in order to bring in Kolchak?

By far the biggest obstacle, of course, was Mikhailov, whom the UR side of the Directory found particularly difficult to accept as a candidate. However, as the nightly meetings wore on and achieved nothing, the atmosphere in Omsk began to heat up. On 26 October, the long-serving SR V. N. Moiseenko, who had been instrumental in the creation of the UR, was surrounded by a group of men dressed as officers outside the Omsk Commercial Club. These men, supposed by those close to the Directory (such as Krol) to belong to a monarchist organisation intent on finding all Constituent Assembly members in Omsk, took Moiseenko away in a car. His body was found a few days later: he had clearly been tortured.<sup>122</sup> The disappearance and murder of Moiseenko showed just how dangerous Omsk was becoming for those on the left. The threat made by Avksent'ev, Zenzinov and Vinogradov on 27 October to resign their post over the issue of Mikhailov's candidacy may be evidence that these moderate men now wanted an excuse to get away from Omsk without appearing to run away.

However, one last attempt was made at holding the Directory together. Over the next few days, as Avksent'ev secured the agreement from PSG representatives to allow the Sibobduma to convene one more time, if only to dissolve itself, Vinogradov formulated a compromise on the candidacy of Mikhailov that included a smaller role for Rogovskii. In the final days of negotiation, as it became clear that Moiseenko had been murdered and that Kadets and officers were talking of Kolchak as a dictator, it became more and more necessary to finalise the talks in the hope of putting an end to the plots.<sup>123</sup> In a meeting with leading Siberian SRs on 29 October, Avksent'ev and Zenzinov received the backing of a majority in agreeing to the inclusion of Mikhailov in the new government, which (according to G. K. Guins) Avksent'ev said he now supported, even though 'he well understood that Mikhailov was fatal for the all-

<sup>122</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, pp. 149–150; Argunov, *Mezhdu dvumia bol'shevizmami*, pp. 32–33; Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, p. 103; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, p. 84.

<sup>123</sup> Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, pp. 87–88.

Russian power, and would destroy it'.<sup>124</sup> The capitulation of the Directory could not have been more complete. Not only did Avksent'ev persuade the Sibobduma to dissolve itself when it convened, but the Council of Ministers was filled with candidates of the Administrative Council. Ten of the fourteen ministerial positions were given to men who had been PSG ministers. The condition of the PSG that all other regional governments should cease to exist if it was to break up itself was agreed to and, as a result, the Urals Government ceded power to the Directory on 2 November. The Directory was also to enforce the formal dissolution of Council of Heads of Departments, Komuch's cabinet of ministers, which had continued to meet along with the Central Committee of the PSR and the Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly at Ufa. The announcement of the new government came on 5 November, the day after the dissolution of the PSG. However, the new formation was anything but the end of the Siberian government. The token involvement of Rogovskii and Right-SR N. P. Oganskii as deputy ministers of, respectively, the Interior and Agriculture could not hide the fact that the Council of Ministers was dominated by regionalists who followed the lead of Vologodskii and Mikhailov, who held the two key posts. Not only that, but the officials who would carry out the policies of this new government were all drawn from the members of the Omsk intelligentsia who had served the PSG. Thus, far from providing the Directory with the opportunity to reassert itself, (as has been suggested by one recent account)<sup>125</sup> the creation of the Council of Ministers was the ultimate in retreat. In fact, as one soviet account put it, 'the Siberian government had become all-Russian'.<sup>126</sup> It seems, then, that the sole achievement of the Ufa State Conference had been to centralise the multiplicity of regional authorities in the east and then to hand power over to the reactionary Siberian government.<sup>127</sup>

### *The Final Omsk Coup d'État*

The final act in the handing over of power into the hands of one man took place quickly and simply, in a manner akin to the last few moves of a chess game once all

<sup>124</sup> Guins, *Sibir*, p. 275.

<sup>125</sup> Swain, *Origins of the Russian Civil War*, p. 234.

<sup>126</sup> Garmiza, V. V. 'Direktoiriia i Kolchak', *Voprosy istorii* (Moscow), No. 10 (1976), p. 24.

<sup>127</sup> The unifying of the regional governments is given by Guins as the sole achievement of the Directory. See *Sibir*, p. 294.



the attacking pieces were in place. The first of the fatal blows to the Directory was the broad circulation of the Chernov Manifesto. Many chose to interpret this as an attempt to undermine the military authority of the Directory and, as a result, the knives were out for the SRs in Omsk. The Directory vacillated. Zenzinov, who had known of the existence of the Manifesto since 24 October but had agreed with Avksent'ev to keep it quiet, had attempted to persuade Chernov that his fears were unfounded and not to act further.<sup>128</sup> This decision – made, in all likelihood, in the hope that those centrists and right-SRs in the Central Committee, the Council of Directors and the Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly would force a climb-down by the Chernovites – was a mistake. The UR Directory members were foolish to think the storm would blow over and, as it finally broke on the day after the formal announcement of the creation of the Council of Ministers, it became clear that the massive concessions given to the right would not now be enough. As Lev Krol put it, the lack of immediate action gave those on the right (and, in particular, the military) evidence to suggest that Avksent'ev and Zenzinov were pandering to the will of the PSR Central Committee.<sup>129</sup> In a stormy Directory meeting on 7 November, Boldyrev made it clear that he saw the manifesto as an open revolt, a formal document of the SRs calling for the mobilisation of armed forces, and that he wanted to arrest the Central Committee (of which his fellow Directory member Zenzinov was, of course, still a member). General Knox, in a communication by direct-wire (he was en route to Vladivostok), asked if the authors of the document were to be shot.<sup>130</sup> In series of direct-wire conversations, Zenzinov, who had been chosen as the most suitable member of the Directory to deal with the SRs in Ufa, argued with Znamenskii and Vedeniapin that the All-Russian Government had the right to demand that the remaining elements of the Komuch government disband. The Directory was now placed in the awkward position of handling official representative bodies of the Constituent Assembly and the PSR and an increasingly extreme situation in Omsk.

Whether the machinations of officers and Kadets in Omsk, under the initiative of Kadet Central Committee member V. N. Pepeliaev, were in part a response to the Chernov Manifesto or simply the execution of a long-term plan is not clear. What is

<sup>128</sup> GARF, f. 144, op. 1, d. 22; Zenzinov, V. (ed.) *Gosudarstvennyi perevorot Admirala Kolchaka v Omske 18 noiarbria 1918 goda*. Paris: Tip. I. Rirakhovskago, 1918 (hereafter *Gosudarstvennyi perevorot*), p. 191.

<sup>129</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 157.

<sup>130</sup> Maiskii, *Demokraticheskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, p. 325; Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, pp. 93–94.



sure is that the problems of the Directory with the PSR came along at the perfect time to excuse such behaviour. Pepeliaev, who had, of course, refused to attend to the Ufa State Conference, despite being nominally a member of the National Centre, had discussed the possibility of installing Admiral Kolchak as a dictator with the influential Czech Colonel R. Gaida at the time of the conference.<sup>131</sup> Now in Omsk, he had plenty of allies (including Zhardetskii, Mikhailov, the officers attached to the temporary *stavka* set up in railway sidings, and possibly General Knox). It is beyond the scope of the present study to recount the story of the military conspiracy, which has in any case been ably detailed before.<sup>132</sup> In short, there were in essence three parts to the preparations. The first involved officers at the *stavka* such as Syromatnikov, Rozanov and Il'in, who made preparations to arrest the Directory, in collaboration with Cossack leader Ataman I. N. Krasil'nikov and Colonel Volkov, the leader of the garrison implicated in the Novoselov affair. Along with this, Admiral Kolchak made a tour of the front, ostensibly to inspect units. However, there can be little doubt that the purpose of this was to distance Kolchak from the plotters on the eve of the coup and gauge the level of support he could expect among the rank and file. The third, key part to the coup was the political preparations, which are of some interest. That the new regime would receive political support was ensured when Pepeliaev turned Zhardetskii's committee of Omsk Kadets into an apparently official body of the Kadet Party, the Eastern Department of the Central Committee, *VOTsK*, on 9 November. The UR supporter Krol was not permitted to become a member.<sup>133</sup> At a Party Conference held by the *VOTsK* on 15 November, Pepeliaev led the way in calling for a dictatorship, describing the Ufa compromise as a 'mistake' and tabling the motion that, 'The party must declare that not only is it not afraid of dictatorship, but in the present situation considers it necessary.'<sup>134</sup> That this motion passed by forty-four votes to one, is a clear indication of the success of his work and that of Zhardetskii before him, in preparing the way for a consensus among local Kadets in favour of a military dictatorship.

When early in the morning of 18 November the SR members of the Directory were arrested, there was little surprise. Conveniently, Avksent'ev and Zenzinov were together with Rogovskii in his apartment along with Gendel'man and Rakov (who had

<sup>131</sup> GARF, f. 195 (*lichnii fond*: V. N. Pepeliaev) op. 1, d. 1, 'Dnevnik', entry for 28 September.

<sup>132</sup> Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, pp. 90–104; Ioffe, *Kolchakovskaia aventiura*, pp. 131–141.

<sup>133</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 149–150.

<sup>134</sup> *Protokoly TsK K-D Patrii*, pp. 468–469.



travelled to Omsk to attempt to mediate between the Directory and the SR bodies in Ufa in the ongoing feud over the closure of Komuch's Council of Heads of Department). They were soon joined in their temporary prison at the city Agricultural Institute (which was serving as the headquarters of Krasil'nikov's Cossacks) by Argunov, who was taken from outside his hotel.<sup>135</sup> Vinogradov was not arrested but informed of the events. Boldyrev, who was on a tour of the front, was told of the coup at dinner in Ufa by a member of the Czechoslovak National Council. Although the SRs' lives were safe, there was no intervention against this *coup d'état* by the Czechoslovaks, as there had been on 20 September. Despite the fact that their National Council was firmly against the coup, the Czechoslovaks in Omsk adopted a neutral stance. On his return to Omsk a few days later, Boldyrev found that Avksent'ev and Zenzinov had already made their way east to emigrate. The weary general, who considered that the Directory had been betrayed by Vologodskii (who remained chair of the Council of Ministers that would now serve Kolchak), wrote to the new 'Supreme Ruler' explaining his intention to leave Siberia.<sup>136</sup>

By the time of the coup, the Directory had alienated all its actual and potential friends as a consequence of its continual deference to the PSG. Without a doubt, the determination of the Siberian regionalists and Kadets to do away with the Directory, together with the desire among the gangs of officers and Cossacks who roamed the town in October and November were instrumental in putting an end to the attempts of the UR to create a functioning coalition of moderate left and right. However, the extent to which Avksent'ev in particular flirted with the reactionary right wing in Omsk, ignoring his natural, parliamentary support base, which truly mirrored the bumbling of his old ally and friend Kerensky a year earlier, ensured that there was no fight to uphold his regime. At the time of the coup, Lev Krol, a stalwart of the UR who had worked as hard as Avksent'ev in brokering a compromise between Komuch and the PSG in the summer, was in Ekaterinburg, discussing with his colleagues in the local, moderate Kadet Party what position to take. If the relationship between the Directory and the left was as hostile as that with the right, what was the position of the centre (which Krol considered his group to represent) to be? Although Krol maintained his stance that a dictatorship would not win in the war with the

<sup>135</sup> Argunov, *Mezhdu dvumia bol'shevizmami*, p. 37; Zenzinov, *Gosudarstvennyi perevorot*, pp. 116–118.

<sup>136</sup> Boldyrev, *Direktoriia, Kolchak, Interventy*, pp. 107–116; Argunov, *Mezhdu dvumia bol'shevizmami*, p. 38.

Bolsheviks, the truth was that the centre ground occupied by the UR had disappeared: even his local party colleagues recognised this by voting to support a dictatorship before they heard of the events in Omsk.<sup>137</sup>

By November, then, the political leadership of the Urals, which had perhaps been closest to Avksent'ev in attempting to find a middle way between the SR parliamentarianism of Komuch and the rightist 'government by clique' of the PSG, had given up on the Directory. The UR leaders in the Directory had yielded to the Siberians on every issue. From the moment of its inception, it had revealed its inability or disinclination to use its supposed authority and take the reins of power into its own hands. This angered those on the left and it exposed to the centre and the right-wing forces in the non-Bolshevik territories the absence of any muscle behind the regime – its incapacity of enforcing the rule of law either in high-political negotiations or on the streets of Omsk. Had the Directory taken the only other route open to it, stuck closer to its roots in the PSR and acted more decisively against Mikhailov and his supporters, the men who paved the way for the Kolchak regime, there would surely have been an all-out war within the anti-Bolshevik camp. That war would have negated the very purpose of the UR, which was to create an anti-Bolshevik alliance. That alliance was impossible to build, as the reactionary forces in control of Omsk were ultimately unwilling to accept any compromise. By the time of the All-Russian Government was formed, Komuch was on the verge of fleeing Samara and the tenure of the Constituent Assembly as an anti-Bolshevik force over. The UR and its brainchild, the Directory, could only offer Omsk the option of coalition and hope it would be accepted, as there was no imperative (strategic, financial or political) to force the hand of the PSG. Given the attitude of various social, political and military forces controlling Omsk, it is not surprising that they accepted no such compromise.

<sup>137</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 157.



## Chapter 5

### *Débâcle* and Dissolution in the South

The failure of the Union of Regeneration in Siberia signified the failure of the anti-Bolshevik political underground in general. Members of the underground, chiefly the UR and the National Centre, had failed to come to the aid of the ailing Directory and, as such, the so-called All-Russian Provisional Government became more a part of the history of the counter-revolution in Siberia, a precursor to the Kolchak regime. But the ease with which the main vestiges of democracy in Siberia were swept away by Kolchak in late 1918 revealed more than the weakness of the position of the Directory in Siberia. Also revealed was the weakness of the entire moderate political opposition to Bolshevism. The Chernovites who had settled in Ufa and Cheliabinsk and who formed the main body of SRs after the dissolution of Komuch had failed to support the Directory, as had those close to Chaikovskii in North Russia and the members of various political groups in South Russia. Of course, all these parties had had good reason to remain aloof from the project and all equally fell foul of or became involved in the increasing militarisation of the anti-Bolshevik struggle – or, as it could perhaps for the first time be fairly termed, the counter-revolution. With North Russia and Siberia coming under control of what were essentially military dictatorships (with a little consultative window-dressing) and with the Volunteer Army establishing itself as the leading anti-Bolshevik force in the South, the goals of the movement had changed. The removal of Soviet power had always been paramount in 1918, for all parties in opposition to the October Revolution, but for many there had always been a parallel goal of preserving at least some of the gains of February, and of the revolutionary process of 1917. Between September and November 1918, all such hope had been dashed, as those politicians who stood for the establishment of a more democratic alternative to Bolshevism were unable to maintain any unity of purpose and provide such an alternative.

The members of the anti-Bolshevik underground who now remained active were located mainly in South Russia, although a few had clung-on, in hiding, in Moscow or Petrograd. The National Centre had taken longer to assemble in South Russia than the UR had in the east and by the autumn of 1918 had only just begun to

organise. Members of the UR were more scattered in the South and lacked purpose – after all, the leadership of their organisation had already failed elsewhere in quite spectacular fashion – and the role of the UR was now to encourage the more leftist tendencies of its Kadet-based counterpart. This was particularly notable in what was the last main act of the members of the underground groups, the Jassy Conference. Here the UR and the National Centre were joined by members of another group, the State Unity Council of Russia, which had formed in South Russia and included noblemen and former members of the Right Centre. However, as will become clear, the conference at Jassy only underlined the inability of Russian political activists to come to any significant agreement over how to combat Bolshevism. Following from this, the National Centre continued to meet for several months, until the arrest of many of its members in Moscow and Petrograd by the Cheka. But this final period of organisational activity was of little significance, as the meetings became little more than a talking-shop, as figures such as Astrof became increasingly aware that their calls for reform were falling on deaf ears. The anti-Bolshevik political underground, then, had effectively ceased to exist by late 1918, as much of the UR leadership left the country. Those who remained merely caused more rifts with the National Centre through their opposition to the Denikin regime. However, the final nail in the coffin of the underground was provided by the Cheka in mid-1919, when those who had remained in Moscow, among them the leading conciliationist N. N. Shchepkin, were arrested.

### *The National Centre in South Russia*

In the late spring and early summer of 1918, the split between the Right Centre and the National Centre over collaboration with Germany continued to have an influence on the tactics of Kadets in South Russia. Miliukov, the nominal leader of the party, had been marginalized by his stance on this issue, yet maintained contact with the German ambassador to Kiev until early July. Meanwhile, his party colleagues in Moscow had been following an Astrof-penned National Centre (therefore anti-German) line since a party conference in the new capital in May. Over the course of the summer, Kadets in the south followed two divergent paths. Those in Ukraine continued to work with the German-sponsored regime of Hetman Skoropadskii, while



those in Russia became closer to the Volunteer Army, which was beginning to overcome some severe difficulties in relation to supplies and finances and had established itself in Ekaterinodar, the capital of the Kuban region, in August. At this time, the constitution was established for a body of political advisors to the army leadership, known as the Special Council. However, despite the fact that many of the local SR-friendly political activists used by the Volunteer Army as assistants in local administration could have been used to form a bridge between the south and the UR-led movement to unify the Volga–Urals region and Siberia, the Special Council decided to end this co-operation, as the local leaders were rather too leftist in approach.<sup>1</sup> At this early stage, then, there was an indication that the Volunteer Army would use the Special Council as a means of side-stepping local opinion and strengthening conservative Russian nationalism, rather than making good use of the pool of civic leaders available. However, it would appear that these developments had an effect upon Astrov and the National Centre, as the leading Kadet members of the anti-Bolshevik underground soon began to make their way south, in the hope of exercising moderate liberal influence on the Volunteer Army. Other members of the underground did the same, notably the UR's remaining Popular Socialist, V. A. Miakotin, although his organisation was not to have the same influence in the south as it had in the east.<sup>2</sup>

Astrov arrived in South Russia in September, travelling, as many did, via Kiev. In Kiev he found many Russian anti-Bolshevik groups, including an organisation that had formed out of the ashes of the Right Centre – the Council for the State Unification of Russia. At this point the Council was as pro-German as the Right Centre had been, in keeping with the prevailing mood of Kiev at that time, although circumstances were soon to change. On arrival in Ekaterinodar, Astrov quickly learned of the developments in the east and before long abandoned the Moscow agreement with the UR, choosing instead to attempt to increase the influence of his brand of conciliationist liberalism upon the Volunteer Army.<sup>3</sup> Many of Astrov's

<sup>1</sup> Denikin, A. I. *Ocherki russkoi smuty* Vol. 3. Berlin: Slovo, 1924, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> Miakotin chose not to continue his work as a member of the UR in South Russia. See Miakotin, V. A. 'Iz nedalekago proshlago II', *Na chuzhoi storone* no. 3 (1923), pp. 179–193.

<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 179–182, on Astrov and the Directory. The term 'conciliationist' in this context is borrowed from William Rosenberg and describes the type of left-wing Kadets who, in the aftermath of the 'April Crisis' of 1917, began to view it necessary for liberals to work with representatives of moderate socialism such as Tsereteli and, of course, Kerensky, Avksent'ev and their cohorts. This tendency included others, such as Krol, who would become part of the UR–National Centre alliance in the spring of 1918. By the autumn, Astrov was the leading Kadet conciliationist, although the frames of



National Centre allies were making the same journey, joining the small Kiev department that, under the leadership of V. V. Shul'gin, had courted the Volunteer Army throughout the summer.<sup>4</sup> Having fled Moscow, perhaps to avoid arrest, more members began to arrive in Kiev from early October. They were mostly short of money and hoped that their connections with the Volunteer Army would help them. For example, M. M. Fedorov, a leading voice in the National Centre, had served with the Political Council, a forerunner of the Special Council set up by General Alekseev (at the instigation of Miliukov) in late 1917. He made it clear to agents of the Denikin regime that many members of the National Centre would be arriving in the South, due to the difficulties faced by all in Moscow. Fedorov wanted to use Volunteer Army funds to assist the development of the organisation in Kiev and thereby increase the influence of pro-Allied, state-minded moderate liberalism in Ukraine. This would counteract the work of Miliukov, who, despite abandoning his flirtation with Germanophilism around this time, continued to be very much in favour of the type of monarchist, dictatorial solution to Bolshevism that, for Kadets of the National Centre such as Fedorov and Astrov, was out of the question. It would also provide much relief for these Kadets, who, given their political moderation, were struggling to find a role in the civil war and needed financial support.<sup>5</sup>

In early October, the National Centre was firmly behind the Moscow agreement with the UR and was certain that a united anti-Bolshevik effort should be led by the Directory. Astrov, at a regional conference of the Kadet Party at Haspra in the Crimea, said 'The National Centre and the Union of Regeneration are united groups with a single programme...we need help for two centres: the Volunteer Army and the Ufa Directory'.<sup>6</sup> Around two weeks later National Centre affiliates Vinaver and Stepanov both reported to the party that it should be concerned that the Denikin regime was seen by the Allied powers as democratic enough to grant the anti-

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reference had altered slightly. In this new stage of the civil war, the term can be seen as denoting a desire to preserve 'Russia one and indivisible' by promoting moderate policies and tempering the excesses of a military dictatorship through the Special Council. See Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, pp. 151, 330–332.

<sup>4</sup> Procyk, A. *Russian Nationalism and Ukraine: The Nationality Policy of the Volunteer Army during the Civil War*. Edmonton, Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1995 (hereafter *Russian Nationalism and Ukraine*), pp. 62–65 contains a good (and rare) account of Russian anti-Bolshevik organisations in Kiev during the German occupation.

<sup>5</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 33, Files 27, 28 29. *Azbuka* files containing reports on the National Centre dated 22 September 1918 O.S. (5 October 1918 N.S.), 14 October 1918 N.S., 25 November 1918 N.S.

<sup>6</sup> *Protokoly TsK K-D Partii*, p. 467.



Bolshevik camp representation at the imminent peace conference. The way to achieve that, they both opined, was for Denikin to be attached to a collegiate government in the form of a directory, although it is not clear whether or not either of these two Kadets meant the Ufa Directory.<sup>7</sup> The break with the Ufa Directory of five, with Astrof refusing his post, signified a sea change in Kadet thinking, however. By the end of October, the Kadets were fully behind the Denikin regime, perhaps in the hope that military victory and the expansion of the territory under Denikin's control would necessitate the formation of a provisional government for South Russia. This shift to the right on the part of the National Centre boosted the unity of the Kadet Party, at least to the casual observer. The Kadets were now to work as a party for Denikin, in the cause of 'Russia one and indivisible', although those affiliated with the National Centre were inevitably to be the most moderate.

### *The Right in South Russia*

Not all those in positions of political influence upon the leadership of the Volunteer Army wanted to make the regime more democratic. Some who fled Moscow in the late summer of 1918 were far more right-wing and were truly fearful of the proposals of Astrof and his associates. For example, the memoir of conservative nationalist V. I. Gurko sheds invaluable light upon the mentality of those on the right. Gurko was still a member of the Right Centre upon his departure from the capital on 30 August. Having seen German-occupied Kiev for himself, Gurko moved to the Don and on to Ekaterinodar in mid-November, with the aim of attempting to unite the anti-Bolshevik south – that is, both Russia and Ukraine. He saw as particularly dangerous the increase in influence of the Kadet party – clearly meaning Astrof's conciliationist wing – and the possible return of an all-Russian government. According to Gurko, the group of Kadets gathered around Ekaterinodar refused to 'widen the circle', and consequently Miliukov was being marginalized, as the Kadets were fearful of 'losing that "hard-won revolution" which led them not so much to power, but to the appearance of power'.<sup>8</sup> Although he later claimed that he had quickly realised that the White generals had no chance against the Bolsheviks, and although he still privately

<sup>7</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 28, Files 41, 42. Kadet party resolutions.

<sup>8</sup> Gurko, 'Iz Petrograda', pp. 36–41.

favoured an alliance with Germany in Ukraine, Gurko held talks with generals Lukomskii and Dragomirov. However, he could not persuade the generals (or those close to them, such as S. D. Sazonov and V. V. Shul'gin), that the development of links with other Russian political organisations in Kiev was a positive step.<sup>9</sup> This was in spite of the fact that Lukomskii and Dragomirov appear to have been considerably more rightist than Denikin and acted against his wishes on many occasions, which may suggest that the meeting with Gurko to hear his views on Ukraine was unofficial or even clandestine.<sup>10</sup>

One organisation in Kiev that Gurko wanted to bring into the circle was the aforementioned Council for the State Unification of Russia, which Gurko was soon to represent and of which he might therefore be considered to have been a member since his departure from Kiev. A late Soviet-era study of the organisation traces its origins to Kiev in September 1918, where several members of the last State Duma found themselves forming a 'Special Conference' to discuss anti-Bolshevik activity. By 13 November, the Council had been formed and had written a letter to General Denikin, signed by chairman Baron V. V. Meller-Zakomel'skii. This new organisation took over the role of the Right Centre in articulating the voice of landowning conservatism and co-opted many of its members. The main reason for this 'transferral' was that the Right Centre had become defined by its inclination towards Germany. The Council for State Unification, however, accepted that Lenin was not to be crushed by a German occupation, and its *raison d'être* was to find a way for Russia to free itself of Bolshevism in accommodation with Great Britain and France.<sup>11</sup> Thus, several of those who formed part of the early Moscow underground but who had subsequently moved away from the mainstream pro-Allied centres towards a German orientation realised by October that the only way to rid Russia of Soviet power was to attract Allied support. In this way, the more rightist National Centre and that new version of the

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 42–43.

<sup>10</sup> Kenez, P. *Civil War in South Russia: Vol. 1, 1918 – The First Year of the Volunteer Army*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971 (hereafter *Civil War in South Russia* Vol. 1) p. 202. Kenez states, 'Dragomirov and Lukomskii stood considerably further to the right than Denikin and the civilian members of the Special Council. Both of them were monarchists, but they did not publicly reveal this because they did not consider it expedient. Lukomskii more than once advised Denikin to come to terms with the monarchists. Whatever their exact role was, there can be no doubt that Lukomskii and Dragomirov made the army pursue a more rightist policy.'

<sup>11</sup> Ioffe, 'Sovet gosudarstvennogo ob"edineniia' p. 225. See also Fediuk, V. P. *Belye: antibol'shevistskoe dvizhenie na iuge Rossii, 1917–1918gg.* Moscow: Airo-XX, 1996 (hereafter *Belye*), pp. 96–97.



Right Centre, the Council for the State Unification of Russia, were closer than they had ever been by the end of October 1918.

It is notable that the political manoeuvrings in South Russia cannot be compared to the maelstrom that was Siberia at around the same time. Opinions in South Russia differed as widely, with the extreme right having even more of a voice. Officer organisations were as widespread and regionalism was just as pertinent an issue, as the governance of Ukraine (and, more immediately, the Kuban) were hot issues for the Volunteer Army, as was the form of power in South Russia. Yet there were no abductions, no bloody murders with links to high government and no real danger on the streets for those of a leftist persuasion. This is testament to the fact that the military leaders were more respected, senior figures who did not resort to the kind of tactics employed in lawless Siberia, and that the right held sway more clearly in the South. When Denikin took the title of Supreme Commander of the Army on 8 October, following the death of General Alekseev, he became unchallenged dictator in South Russia. The falling into line of the Kadets at their conference in Ekaterinodar that month was little more than a formality. One's overall impression of Astrov and the National Centre in their attitude to the Ufa Directory and to coalition in general is that they had little choice but to accept that the military was in charge and that their role was – as and when opportunity arose – merely to nudge Denikin in more sensible directions. However, according to the leading authority on the Kadets in the civil war, the Kadet opposition to federalism 'gave political legitimation to the nationalist instincts of the Volunteer command'.<sup>12</sup> Not only were the Kadets not likely to rock the boat, but their central tenet of 'Russia one and indivisible' provided Denikin with political backing for his dictatorial instincts. Those to the left of the Kadets, mainly SRs and members of the UR, had no authority at all and, though they held local meetings, there is little record of them and they resulted in no direct action.<sup>13</sup> There is no evidence of the UR or any other leftist anti-Bolshevik group attracting any support in the military, and perhaps because the left had no discernable leadership in the south, there was never any serious challenge to the Denikin regime mounted by the UR or any other SR group.<sup>14</sup> The UR would have an opportunity to raise its voice,

<sup>12</sup> Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, p. 337.

<sup>13</sup> Miakotin, V. A. 'Iz nedalekago proshlago II', *Na Chuzhoi Storone*, No.3 (1923), pp. 191–192.

<sup>14</sup> One example of a UR-led challenge to the authority of Denikin was its opposition to the military rule of Odessa, and a project for a South Russian directory. See below, pp. 218–222.



however, in the Jassy conference in November, which brought the left and right together to discuss the way forward for the anti-Bolshevik struggle.

### *The Jassy Conference*

It seems strange that, at a time when Allied recognition (or even the vaguest promise of it) was so highly prized by far more organised and official formations in the east, the opportunity to meet with Allied officials to discuss the best way in which the Allies could assist the war against Soviet power came to the disparate organisations based in South Russia without any group even bothering to petition the Allies. In fact, it was the initiative of one or two men not highly placed in either the Allied or White chain of command that resulted in delegations from Russian political groups arriving in the Rumanian town of Jassy in November 1918.<sup>15</sup> By all accounts the initiator of this conference was the French official Emile Henno, who is referred to in Russian accounts as French consul in Kiev (although it appears that this posting was far from official).<sup>16</sup> In fact, Henno was the only Allied representative closely connected with the preparations of the conference, although he had met with French ambassador to Rumania, de Beaupoil de Saint-Aulaire, to discuss the formation of a Russian advisory council to work with the Allies on the nature of any intervention within the boundaries of the former empire.<sup>17</sup> The ambassador had not committed to this initiative, however, and the lack of a serious Allied diplomatic or military involvement at this stage throws some doubt on the status of the conference. That is to say, if anything concrete was agreed by the Russian delegation to Jassy, was there any guarantee of the Allied powers keeping their side of the bargain and providing serious help?

<sup>15</sup> The sole dedicated western account of the conference is McNeal, R. H. 'The Conference of Jassy: an Early Fiasco of the Anti-Bolshevik Movement', in Curtiss, J. S. (ed.) *Essays in Russian and Soviet History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, pp. 221–236 (hereafter 'The Conference of Jassy'). Although this is a well-balanced and fair account of proceedings, McNeal rather curiously chose to focus on the preparations for and early sessions of the conference, and the article does not give due attention to the debate on the subject of power, which played a key role in ensuring the failure of this attempt to unite Russian opposition to Bolshevism. It is hoped that this chapter, by redressing this balance, will provide a fuller explanation of the disaster that was the Jassy Conference and, by placing the conference in context, will allow a better understanding of the significance of this failure for the Russian Civil War.

<sup>16</sup> Astrov, N. I. 'Iasskoe soveshchanie (iz dokumentov)', *Golos minuvshago na chuzhoi storone*, No. 3 (1926) (hereafter 'Iasskoe soveshchanie'), p. 43; Gurko, 'Iz Petrograda', p. 47; McNeal, 'The Conference of Jassy', p. 222.

<sup>17</sup> Procyk, *Russian Nationalism and Ukraine*, p. 84.



The initiative of Henno, however, was met with some enthusiasm by his Russian counterparts in Jassy, who had been working to further the cause of the Volunteer Army by holding talks with Allied representatives. Jassy had acted as the Rumanian capital after the German occupation of Bucharest, and the Russian consulate there had been acting as the embassy. On 30 October, S. A. Poklevskii-Kozel (the former Russian ambassador to Rumania), Colonel S. N. Il'in (nominally still the leader of the Russian Red Cross in Rumania) and members of the military joined Henno in the consulate in Jassy to form an 'organisational committee'. The aim of this committee was to invite representatives from 'centres of Russian political thought' to work out the best way in which assistance for the anti-Bolsheviks could be provided.<sup>18</sup> The bulk of the Russian delegation at the conference came as a result of the work of Colonel Il'in, who travelled to Kiev in order to round up some of the leading Russian politicians there. Il'in presented himself at the headquarters of the Council for the State Unification of Russia to inform the group that Allied representatives in Jassy, feeling cut-off from events in the west, wanted to start an anti-German front and needed representatives of Russian political groups to help them combat the Bolshevik-German threat. The Council was unanimously keen, and, along with the UR and the National Centre, sent a delegation led by Baron V.V. Meller-Zakomelskii to meet with the others in Kiev, from where they moved on to Jassy. Gurko was sent shortly afterwards, as a member of the Council who had been to Ekaterinodar and knew more of the workings of the Volunteer Army. In Kiev, where the conference was being taken very seriously, various other Russian politicians were also preparing to make the journey to Jassy, such as the Kadet leader P. N. Miliukov, former member of the State Duma N. V. Savich, eminent Kiev activist V. Ia. Demchenko, and the president of the South Russian mining bureau and ex-member of the State Council, N. F. Ditmar. This group departed Kiev on 14 November, travelling in Demchenko's own railway wagon via Odessa.<sup>19</sup>

The main delegation of Russians arrived in Jassy on 16 November and got to work immediately. After a pleasant journey, the delegation found its circumstance in Jassy rather inauspicious, as the venue was the Russian consulate building itself, in what Gurko later described as the 'semi-basement', where the delegates were surrounded by archives and old broken furniture. This conference was far less

<sup>18</sup> Astrov, 'Iasskoe soveshchanie', p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> Gurko, 'Iz Petrograda', p. 48.

organised and structured than the Ufa Conference, and from the outset the discussion was something of a free-for-all, which led the delegates to frequently digress and drift from the point. Il'in and Poklevskii-Kozell only appeared on two occasions, as did representatives of the Allies other than Henno, whose faithfulness to the cause of the conference and standing in France were both highly dubious. Small wonder that one major participant, Gurko, later commented that there was nothing more 'curious, pitiful and absurd' than this conference, which he saw as the eloquent but fruitless arguing of 'lost voices and weakened forces'.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, a reading of the conference minutes gives the impression that the Russian delegation was somewhat self-deluded with regard to its own importance – to say nothing of the importance of their country to the victorious powers in the west. This was particularly true of Miliukov, whose pompous tone and tendency to dominate discussions with long monologues are apparent on virtually every page.

The first meeting was opened at 3.30 p.m. on 16 November by Poklevskii-Kozell in the name of the 'organisational committee'. Poklevskii-Kozell informed the delegates that the work of the committee was now over and that those gathered together before him must work to find a way of forging links with the Allies, of whom the only representative present was the Frenchman Henno.<sup>21</sup> The chairman of the conference was chosen as Baron Meller-Zakomel'skii. Other candidates had party affiliations and it was perhaps decided that the baron, who took something of a back seat in proceedings, would be the best and most neutral choice. In this first meeting, the majority of the talking was done by Miliukov (who attended as a Kadet and as a representative of the Council for State Unification), Fedorov for the National Centre and Titov for the UR. The latter two provided some introductory remarks on the nature and history of their organisations, with Titov including the plans made by the UR that spring in the hope of an Allied landing in the north. Fedorov made it clear that the National Centre now stood firmly behind General Denikin and the Volunteer Army and that his group was willing to work alongside Ukrainian centres and the Council for State Unification as well as the UR as a body which was representative of 'state-minded elements of socialist parties'. Poklevskii-Kozell underlined these

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 36, File 14 (Jassy Conference), 'Zhurnal No.1', p. 1.



sentiments with the warning that, regardless of varying opinions, Russia needed to provide the Allies with a clear, single goal.<sup>22</sup>

Such introductory pleasantries aside, the main talk of the day was on the subject that played on the mind of all Kadets at this time: nationalities policy and, in particular, Ukraine. Miliukov initially spoke on the subject of Finnish and Polish separation, which his party had accepted in 1917. However, the conference supported Miliukov's assertion that the Allies should not take any action that might be seen as supporting Ukrainian independence. This was particularly significant as the mercurial Henno was keen to return to Kiev, seemingly to establish relations with Hetman Skoropadskii in the hope of turning the orientation of his regime towards the Allies. Miliukov, by far the most experienced man at the table in terms of foreign relations, perhaps saw that Henno was hedging his bets somewhat, and expressed concern that the result could be Skoropadskii receiving assistance from the French which might be better directed toward the Volunteer Army. Such sentiments found unanimous support at this and the evening session of the first day of the conference. Others, notably Fedorov and Titov, expressed the view that Skoropadskii was under severe threat from both Bolshevik and nationalist forces, and a broad consensus was reached that Allied intervention via Odessa was necessary to help the Volunteer Army control events in Ukraine as a part of a general strategy to combat Bolshevism in Russia. Miliukov, despite the trouble he had caused for himself in the past by writing communiqués to the Allies, suggested the dispatch of a telegram demanding a declaration of Allied policy on the unity of Russia. This was approved, as was a request by the conference to Henno to remain in Jassy for a few days. It was considered by the Russians that Henno was in fact under 'instructions' to do what the conference said and that once in Ukraine his actions would be based on conference decisions.<sup>23</sup>

A short session the following morning read over a statement of general principles to be given to Allied representatives for dispatch to Paris, Washington, London and Rome. This statement was prepared by Miliukov and Titov and was generally approved, the resulting document being presented at a meeting at the British consulate that afternoon. The British Consul, Sir George Barclay, greeted the rump conference in attendance and spoke for the main four Allied powers, encouraging the

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2–5; 'Zhurnal No. 2', pp. 2–9; Astrov, 'Iasskoe soveshchanie', p. 45.

Russians and requesting that they give the Allies guidance on how best to help them in their struggle.<sup>24</sup> Miliukov gave a short introduction on the composition of the Russian delegation, followed by the five points of principle he and Titov had prepared. These points were:

- 1) Repudiation of the Brest-Litovsk treaty and recognition of a united, indivisible Russia based on its borders of August 1914, excluding Poland (and presumably Finland).
- 2) Non-recognition of all other states formed as a result of German assistance that did not comply with the formula of a united, indivisible Russia.
- 3) Correspondingly, single diplomatic representation for Russia, for example at the forthcoming peace conference.
- 4) A single Russian command for the removal from Russia of the Bolsheviks.
- 5) Recognition of the great service in the recreation of Russia of the Volunteer Army and the extraordinary importance of its work.

The intentions were clear: any Allied intervention, whether it was from one of the Entente or, more likely, a hybrid force of Greeks, Serbs and Rumanians (who Miliukov regarded as 'the avant-garde of the Allied forces') would not act independently, but would serve under a Russian commander-in-chief. Ukrainian independence was to be regarded as an unnatural by-product of the German occupation, recognition of which would plunge South Russia into anarchy and cause the failure of operations against Soviet power, which Miliukov was attempting to portray as the clear, universal aim of all the bodies represented at the meeting. The declaration did not, however, go into any detail on the scale of intervention required, the urgency of the situation, or the way in which any landings should be directed. Perhaps this was due to a desire on the part of Miliukov to be optimistic and formally diplomatic in approach. However, Fedorov, speaking on behalf of the National Centre and the UR, was rather more aggressive. Pointing out the work that both organisations had undertaken that year on the understanding of a working relationship with the

<sup>24</sup> The remaining three Allied representatives were Charles Vopicka (United States), de Beaupoil de St-Aulaire (France) and Giacinto Auriti (Italy).



Allies, he stressed the importance of Allied support for the Volunteer Army, and made it clear (in a way that Miliukov had not) that assistance must come not merely in terms of money and material, but in the form of landings in South Russia. Sir George Barclay concluded proceeding by agreeing that the two sides should meet again once the conference had completed its work.<sup>25</sup>

The extent to which this meeting was a success is debatable. On one hand, the declaration contained many omissions, most significantly concerning intervention, and it is clear from research conducted by R. H. McNeal in the United States that it was in fact not sent until 6 December (the radio-telegraph station was overloaded and the Allied representatives were restricted to a few hundred words a day), by which time events in Ukraine had rendered much of the document irrelevant and the conference had disintegrated. The delayed correspondence of the diplomats also pointed out potential problems for the stated nationalities policy with regard to the Bessarabian question, and even drew attention to Miliukov's dalliance with Germany.<sup>26</sup> Not only was such communication unlikely to persuade the Allied governments of the advisability of working with the anti-Bolshevik camp, it revealed that the diplomats in Jassy were not particularly impressed either. However, the delegates had succeeded on two counts. Firstly, they had established themselves with Allied emissaries of a far more official character than Henno. Secondly, they had found some common ground over nationalities policy and had produced some sort of statement of intent within a very short time. The mere fact that Miliukov and Titov had succeeded in working together at all pointed the way forward for the conference to avoid the kind of narrow partisan divisions that would be disastrous if a cross-party political element to the anti-Bolshevik movement was to survive.

The evening meeting discussed the departure of Henno for Kiev, which now received general support. This was unsurprising now that the conference had forged relations with more senior official diplomats. However, the basis of this support was

<sup>25</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 36, File 16, 'Protokol soveshchaniia Russkoi delegatsii v Iassakh s soiuznimi poslanikami, sostoiavshagosiia 17/4 Noiabria 1918 goda, v 3 chasa dnia, v angliiskii missii', pp. 1–6. The text of a closing speech by Miliukov can be seen in Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 36, File 17, 'Pervoe Obrashchenie Russkoi Delegatsii v Iassakh k Soiuznim Derzhavam'.

<sup>26</sup> McNeal, 'The Conference of Jassy', pp. 227–228. If any reports on the conference arrived in London from Sir George Barclay in Jassy, they appear not to have survived. In fact there appears to have been almost nothing in the way of correspondence from Jassy between September and December 1918, probably due to the restrictions. The majority of correspondence from Jassy in 1918 can be seen in PRO, FO 371/3155 and FO 372/1160.



that Henno was to act on specific instructions drafted that day and to which Henno had agreed. These were that Henno was to actively support Russian organisations in Kiev, as a representative of the delegation, and that in relations with Skoropadskii he was to work for the principle of Russia united and indivisible.<sup>27</sup> The fact that there was a fundamental inconsistency in this position did not go unnoticed. M. V. Braikevich, the Kadet and former mayor of Odessa, suggested that the interference in Ukrainian affairs by Henno could result in a situation, comparable with that in the Don region, whereby many small local governments could arise and complicate matters for the Russians. S. N. Tret'iakov pointed out that attempting to turn Skoropadskii to a 'Russian orientation' necessarily would remove the Hetman from power.<sup>28</sup> Astrov has also suggested that there was some discord over the status of the Kiev Duma, an organ of the Provisional Government of 1917. According to Astrov, a representative of the UR (probably Bunakov-Fundaminskii or Titov, who were the most vocal members at Jassy) insisted that the Duma be re-established and elected according to the laws of 1917, thus proving yet again how close the UR was to the spirit of 1917. Other organisations were concerned about the age and property qualifications for such an election, which was understandable given the fact that the dumas in the South generally had been dominated by the left. In the end, a compromise formula was agreed and added to the instructions given to the Frenchman.<sup>29</sup> Having been given the blessing of the conference to make his trip, Henno departed the following day, although he did not make it as far as Kiev and never had the opportunity to carry out his rather conflicting instructions.

After a somewhat aimless discussion about Russia's borders the following morning, the 'evening session' of 18 November opened early, in the middle of the afternoon, to welcome a number of arrivals and discuss their urgent news. The party on Demchenko's railway wagon had arrived, accompanied by Poklevskii-Kozell,

<sup>27</sup> Hoover, Vrangeli Collection, box 36, file 17, 'Verbal'naia instruktsiia Russkoi delegatsii v Iassakh upravliaiushchemu Frantsuzskomu konsulom v Kieve gospodinu Enno, priniataia v vechernem zasedanii delegatsii 4-go Noiabria 1918 goda', pp. 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 4', pp. 1-3. Incidentally, McNeal listed Braikevich as a delegate to the conference from the Council for State Unity, although William Rosenberg contends he was there as a member of the UR. In fact, the minutes reveal Braikevich was far more moderate than any member of the Council for State Unity, and was far closer to Titov, which would suggest (as would his later actions) that Braikevich was indeed affiliated to the UR, although a note on the delegates to the conference has him as a member of both. See McNeal, 'The Conference of Jassy', pp. 223-224 (n. 3); Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, p. 353; Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 36, File 13, 'Spisok chlenov Iasskoi delegatsii', p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Astrov, 'Iasskoe soveshchanie', p. 50.



British military attaché General Ballard, his French counterpart Marquis Belois, and former Russian commander of the Rumanian front, General Shcherbachev (who had been negotiating in Jassy with the French military attaché General Berthelot for French intervention). The new arrivals informed the conference that the Skoropadskii regime was about to fall to Petliura and that Ukraine would come under the control of the five-man Directory leading the Ukrainian National Union. This was clearly a far greater threat than even the Hetman to the Great Russian policy of the Volunteer Army and the conference, and all agreed that intervention via Odessa was now needed more urgently than ever. Based on suggestions by Miliukov and Fedorov, it was agreed to send Colonel I. M. Novikov and General Galievskii to Constantinople to appeal to General Franchet d'Esperey, and that K. R. Krovopuskov should go to Odessa to prepare for an Allied landing, accompanied by Henno, who was of course supposed to move on to Kiev.<sup>30</sup> Further discussion the following day on the subject resulted in the dispatch of a telegram to the Allies (this time definitely sent, at least to Paris) warning that Ukrainian 'chauvinism' would only help anarchism and Bolshevism and begging for a significant landing in Odessa of troops who would immediately move to occupy Kiev and Khar'kov, a clear statement by the Allies that they would support 'elements of order', and a warning to Germany not to interfere.<sup>31</sup>

Although circumstances were placing the conference under pressure, the first four days passed without any serious discord and, in general, as Astrov later pointed out, the delegates were behind Miliukov.<sup>32</sup> However, the focus of the conference had thus far been almost entirely on Ukraine, a subject on which all (with the possible exception of the SR I. I. Bunakov-Fundaminskii, who was unsure about the advisability of using interventionist troops in Ukraine) were agreed. This was to change on 20 November, when the conference moved on to discuss perhaps the most important question of all: the form of government that should preside over the anti-Bolshevik camp.

This controversial subject gradually came to the surface during a discussion on the subject of who should be the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, which

<sup>30</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 7'. It should be noted that this is the account of the second session of 18 November. 'Zhurnal No. 6' is an account of the session held the following morning.

<sup>31</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 6', pp. 2-3; Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 36, File 17, 'Obrashchenie dobrovol'cheskoi armii k soiuznikam', pp. 1-3. On the fall of Skoropadskii in Kiev see Fediuk, *Belye*, pp. 109-122.

<sup>32</sup> Astrov, 'Iasskoe soveshchanie', p. 49.

was raised by the Octobrist N. V. Savich at the morning meeting.<sup>33</sup> There were only two choices facing the conference: General Denikin or Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, as Savich pointed out. Savich also attempted to characterise the orientation of the conference as being in favour of a dictatorship in which internal affairs and relations with the Allies would be handled by the commander-in-chief. There were many considerations, Savich stated, to take into account. The Grand Duke represented only the higher ruling class of pre-revolutionary times, and a dictatorship of this kind (that was essentially of the 'old order') would not be easily changed, in the way that an elected government would, in the case of a general amnesty. Here, Savich was implying that it would be difficult to mobilise the masses, which in Russia's case meant of course the peasantry, behind a counter-revolution that would appear to them as standing for a return to the era of the Romanovs. The advantages of choosing General Denikin were not only that he did not carry the baggage of such a connection with the old regime, but also that he was highly respected and popular among the officer classes. However, much of the anti-Bolshevik struggle was as much about honour and pride as it was politics, and Savich made it clear that 'the Hetman' (meaning Skoropadskii) would refuse categorically to subjugate himself to Denikin.<sup>34</sup> From this it is possible to draw a more broad point that the general was not the most diplomatic of figures and, as the Volunteer Army was based in South Russia, relations with the Cossacks of the Don and the Kuban were of prime importance. November 1918 was a crucial period for the Volunteer Army, when the vigorous pursuit of Great Russian policy meant relationships with regional leaders, and in particular leaders such as Ataman Krasnov and Ataman Filimonov, were to be put under severe strain, and that the issue of federalism was especially controversial. In a few sentences, then, Savich, whilst clearly supporting dictatorship, managed to suggest many reasons why any such regime would be embattled from the outset.

The ensuing discussion skirted around the initial point made by Savich that the commander-in-chief should have the powers of a dictator, with Miliukov, Fedorov, Gurko and others attempting to tie the issue in with the task of combating regionalism. Miliukov and Fedorov supported Denikin, as of course did the Kadets as a party. Miliukov gave the opinion that it was important for to take a hard line against the likes of Skoropadskii and Krasnov, whom he identified as the main threats to the

<sup>33</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 8', p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.



re-establishment of a united Russia. Fedorov had other reasons for favouring Denikin. Denikin was seen by all as the successor to General Alekseev, who had been a talismanic figure for the moderate right and, of course, had been the preferred choice of the National Centre for the role of either dictator or commander-in-chief as a part of a tripartite directory. However, Gurko, who was less keen on placing all the hopes of the anti-Bolshevik camp in the hands of the Volunteer Army, made it clear that the Grand Duke would receive the support of the Council for the State Unification of Russia, which at the time, he said, was the main agency present in Kiev actively campaigning against Ukrainian independence. Those on the left of the conference, though, had other ideas. Clearly bent on preventing a military dictatorship by Denikin, Bunakov-Fundaminskii spoke in favour of the Grand Duke, although he made it clear that, as far as the UR was concerned, the preferred choice as commander-in-chief and the form of government administering the anti-Bolshevik zone were not the same issue, even if Savich, Miliukov and the others had been attempting to create such an association. Titov also spoke out against the Denikin camp, drawing the attention of the conference to the agreement made in the spring between the National Centre and the UR in which General Boldyrev was named as the deputy for Alekseev, and stated that according to the principles of the Moscow agreement, he (and not Denikin) should be seen as the natural heir to Alekseev.<sup>35</sup> Both UR members were perhaps being somewhat unrealistic. It is unlikely that the moderate Bunakov-Fundaminskii genuinely favoured the Grand Duke. Likewise, while Titov must have seen that granting Boldyrev the title of commander-in-chief would necessarily signify the unification of the southern and eastern fronts of the civil war, and in all likelihood place South Russia under the control of the Ufa Directory – for at this point, two days after the Omsk coup, the delegates in Jassy were unaware that the UR-led regime had been deposed. Militarily and politically speaking, both would have been practically impossible, even if the Directory had survived. In all likelihood, then, the UR men were using these points to force open the debate and prevent a bandwagon developing behind either Denikin or the Grand Duke that would allow a consensus to build in favour of a dictatorship.

Thus, the subject of the discussion turned from the preferred commander-in-chief to one of the favoured form of government in South Russia. The divisions that

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2–5; Astrov, ‘Iasskoe soveshchanie’, pp. 53–55.



began to appear at the morning meeting of 20 November have been previously characterised by R. H. McNeal as forming three camps: the 'right', the 'centre' and the 'left'. The 'right' included Savich, Gurko and other member of the Council for State Unification, and stood for a dictatorship by Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich; the 'centre' was led by Miliukov and Fedorov, and favoured a Denikin dictatorship; the 'left', led by Bunakov-Fundaminskii, were adamant that a dictatorship of any sort would be disastrous and preferred a three-man directory.<sup>36</sup> These three factions clearly correspond to, respectively, the Right Centre, the National Centre and the UR, which reveals that, in the nine months since the three organisations started to form, the arguments between the different sides of the political (as opposed to military) wing of the anti-Bolshevik camp had not developed into more sophisticated, policy-driven debates. The issue was power or, more specifically, what the goals of the civil war were, and whom its leaders represented. It is unsurprising, then, that the evening session quickly resurrected the origins of the political underground in Moscow and the negotiations between the UR and the National Centre. The underground, it seems, had come full circle.

Miliukov opened matters with a position that was essentially the same as that of Fedorov or, for that matter, Astrov or any member of the Moscow National Centre.<sup>37</sup> He stated that the Moscow agreement had been broken at the Ufa State Conference, and implied that any adherence to principles of that agreement was no longer necessary. Furthermore, according to Miliukov, a more satisfactory expression of those principles existed in the form of the Special Council. In response, Titov, on behalf of the UR, defended the actions of his group at Ufa, making quite valid points that the reasons why the Ufa State Conference did not succeed fully in honouring the terms of the Moscow agreement were beyond the control of the UR. The UR encountered difficulties, he argued, due to the absence of members of the Kadet party, in particular Astrov, and that the expansion of the Directory to five members reflected

<sup>36</sup> McNeal, 'The Conference of Jassy', p. 231. These alliances reveal that although Miliukov had come to the conference as a Kadet and a member of the Council for State Unification, he in fact was much closer to the National Centre which was of course almost entirely consisted of members of his own party, and thus the conference signified the return of Miliukov to more mainstream liberal politics following his period in a Germanophile wilderness.

<sup>37</sup> The term 'Moscow National Centre' is used here to distinguish Astrov's tendency from the Kiev version of the organisation led by V. V. Shul'gin, rightly regarded by William Rosenberg as a separate organisation altogether and one which had no direct roots in the political underground of early 1918. For this reason, and for reasons of space, the Kiev organisation of Shul'gin, the 'South Russian National Centre' will not be examined. See Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, p. 354.



both this and the need to include the hitherto unconsidered representatives of Siberian regionalism, as the major political force in the liberated territory east of the Urals. Titov went further, claiming that the delegates gathered in Jassy had the opportunity to correct the mistakes made in Ufa, as the opening of the Black Sea had made South Russia an equally important arena in the civil war as the east, and that the creation of a South Russian government, along the principles of the Moscow agreement, was the way to do so. This government should, then, be a three-man directory with a 'business cabinet' of ministers.<sup>38</sup>

This did not impress the other two factions at the conference. Titov was supported by Bunakov-Fundaminskii, who made the point that at a time of war, a dictatorship that genuinely expressed the will of the whole nation (an example of which for the SR was George Washington) was an ideal form of government. Unfortunately, he went on, no such unifying figure existed to unite the anti-Bolshevik camp and for that reason, if no other, the government should be a directory. This caused Fedorov to counter with several further points about the Moscow agreement between the UR and the National Centre. His main point was that the National Centre had always preferred a military dictatorship to a collegiate government and that the decision to agree to a three-man directory was made as a result of the extreme need to have a united front against Bolshevism, which led the Kadet-based group to go to great lengths to reach an accommodation with the moderate socialists of the UR. However, Fedorov argued, this compromise was entered into on the specific condition that the Constituent Assembly of the convocation that had met on 5 January 1918, would have no role to play. Furthermore, the change in circumstances of the civil war that had come with the opening of the Black Sea and the possibility of Russian forces linking up with the Allies, meant that a new administration for South Russia was needed. Implying that these new circumstances rendered the principles of the Moscow agreement obsolete, Fedorov asserted that the most efficient, from a military point of view, would be a dictatorship by General Denikin. Other delegates from the right wing of the conference again argued in favour of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, with Savich opining that a constitutional monarchy should be the goal of anti-Bolshevik movement.<sup>39</sup> Miliukov then concluded the meeting with a long speech on the perils of democracy at a time of war. His disdain for Titov and Bunakov-

<sup>38</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 9', pp. 2-5.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 6-10.

Fundaminskii became clear as he spoke of socialists being under illusions regarding the workings of a collective government. Experience had shown, he argued, that there was constant disagreement over the composition of such a government, over its organisation and over the responsibilities of ministers before the collective and before parties. A coalition would always face the possibility of collapse at any moment, particularly at a time of war, and in a country where democracy was not well developed. As for the other option facing the conference, Miliukov was unequivocal, stating, 'Dictatorship is not only possible, it already exists'.<sup>40</sup>

These arguments wore on the following morning. A way towards a compromise was found, however. Those on the right of the conference, such as Gurko and Savich, were not unmovable on the issue of dictatorship. In fact, they were perhaps less hostile towards the socialists than was Miliukov. Gurko agreed with the assertion made the previous day by Bunakov-Fundaminskii that the apparatus necessary for a dictatorship was not in place and that an ideal candidate did not exist. This led M. V. Braikevich to suggest that Denikin should act with the power of a military dictator with regard to the conduct of the war, but that he should have some assistance in civil matters. The Kadet, a member of the Council for State Unification rather than the National Centre, suggested that a Council of Ministers, elected by a state conference of around sixty representatives, should perform such a role. This led Fedorov to say that a three-man directory would only be acceptable if Denikin was its leader.<sup>41</sup> This was a clear shift in position by the National Centre delegate and one that recognised that the momentum at the conference was shifting away from a dictatorship. This was because although those who desired a dictatorship were numerically in the majority (in fact, only the handful of UR delegates were enthusiastic about a coalition directory), there was a fairly even split between those who favoured Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich and the supporters of General Denikin, and many, particularly those on the right who wanted to avoid a unitary military regime, began to see a directory as preferable to a Denikin dictatorship.

When the evening session opened, a number of alternative schemes were put forward. Savich proposed a model in which the Grand Duke was head of government, with two assistants: one should be commander-in-chief of the armed forces, one should be a kind of prime minister. Braikevich suggested a military dictatorship, but

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 11–14; Astrov, 'Iasskoe soveshchanie', pp. 60–61.

<sup>41</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 10', pp. 1–5.



in order to guarantee a transition to democracy, the dictator should chair a directory in which the other members concerned themselves with civil matters. M. S. Margulies of the Council for State Unification spoke in favour of a directory that was an evenly powered triumvirate whose members should be elected by a state conference along the line of the UR model.<sup>42</sup> Savich also stated that these ideas had gained favour because of a point made earlier by Bunakov-Fundaminskii that the Allies did not approve of a dictatorship.<sup>43</sup>

At this point it was clear that, as the conference was split on the issue of power, the model that was considered to be most attractive to the Allies would be more likely to win the argument. Consequently, there followed a general discussion on the construction of power in Russia including relations with the Ufa Directory, the liquidation of which the conference still remained unaware. This had implications for one of the most important issues for the men sitting around the conference table: that of Russian diplomatic representation to the Allies and at the forthcoming peace conference. Miliukov, favouring a Denikin dictatorship as he did, had found himself opposed both by those politically to his left and those to his right. However, he skilfully used this development in the discussion to forge some common ground with men such as Gurko, who was as much against sharing power with the Ufa Directory (as Bunakov-Fundaminskii had indicated as desirable) as anyone in the National Centre. The dissent caused by this discussion seems to have wiped out the previous tiptoeing toward a compromise, and was decisive in deciding the outcome of the conference.

Evidently the issue of entering relations with the Ufa Directory caused a rift between the 'right' and 'left' groups. As a result, a vote was taken among those who supported a dictatorship to see who was the preferred candidate, Denikin emerging as clear winner with nine votes against four in favour of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich.<sup>44</sup> However, the two days of discussion on the question of power had revealed that on the most important questions facing the conference there was little in the way of consensus. In fact, although those in the Denikin camp had effectively won out, they had received as much opposition from the extreme right of the delegation as they had from the left. Men such as Savich and Gurko, essentially monarchists, had

<sup>42</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 11', pp. 1–6.

<sup>43</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 11', p. 6; See 'Zhurnal No. 10', pp. 5–6 for the initial assertion made by Bunakov-Fundaminskii.

<sup>44</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 11', pp. 6–10.

found almost as much in common with the socialists of the UR as they had with the dreaded liberalism of Miliukov and Fedorov. It was only the issue of working with the Ufa Directory, which ironically no longer existed, that scared the right away from making an accommodation with the left that could have edged out those who supported Denikin. The Jassy Conference had, then, reached some sort of resolution, but as the delegates must have known as they met during the final two days of the conference to work on their final communiqué to the Allies and prepare for further work to be undertaken in Odessa, they would not be able to present a united front to the Allied diplomats.

The meetings held on 22 and 23 November were extremely brief and uneventful, and comprised mainly the discussion of minor points to be included in the declaration to the Allies.<sup>45</sup> This document, authored by Miliukov and Titov, was an appeal to the Allies to recognise six fundamental principles:

- 1) Russia was a united state and all claims of independence from Russia made after the October Revolution were not to be recognised.
- 2) The Allies would work with the Russians in the fight against Bolshevism.
- 3) The Allies would send immediate aid to Denikin.
- 4) Allied or Russian forces should replace German and Austro-Hungarian garrisons within Russian territory.
- 5) Allied aid would assist an offensive on Moscow and Petrograd.
- 6) The united command would be under a Russian general.<sup>46</sup>

This was presented to the Allied representatives as before, this time in the hall of the Russian consulate, that evening. The Allies were clearly less than impressed by the lack of detail and the lack of progress made since the meeting six days previously. Sir

<sup>45</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 12', pp. 1–3; 'Zhurnal No. 13', pp. 1–2; 'Zhurnal No. 14', pp. 1–2; 'Zhurnal No. 15', pp. 1–3.

<sup>46</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 36, File 17, untitled document, p. 1; Astrov, 'Iasskoe soveshchanie', pp. 67–69.



George Barclay and Marquis de Beupoil de St-Aulaire spoke of the difficulty in sending such a document to any of the Allied governments, as the Rumanian authorities had now limited telegraphic communication to no more than two hundred words in any twenty-four-hour period (it will be remembered, of course, that they had not in fact yet sent the appeal of 17 November). Gurko pleaded with the Allied diplomats on behalf of the delegation, stating that at least 150000 men were needed to put an end to the 'bloody politics' of Soviet power.<sup>47</sup> At the end of the meeting the Allies had not committed to anything – as Gurko later wrote, they uttered 'a few nice words with no real significance', and his judgement of them was that they were 'second degree' representatives who in all likelihood already knew the attitude towards Russia held by their respective governments.<sup>48</sup> In consideration of the possibility that the Allied diplomats might not act as the Russian delegation wished, General Shcherbachev was sent to Bucharest to meet with General Berthelot in the hope that an agreement for a landing at Odessa could be reached via a military, as opposed to a political, route.<sup>49</sup>

The other issue addressed on the final two days of the conference in Jassy related to the election of a delegation to be sent to meet directly with Allied governments in Paris. Ultimately, Tret'íakov, Shebeko, Gurko and Miliukov were chosen in an election, which caused a definite rift between the now more unified centre and right groups and the increasingly isolated UR. Bunakov-Fundaminskii had claimed that the organisations had not been granted the authority to perform such a task and that the elections should be postponed until the delegations had returned to Russia. To this end, he suggested that the elections should take place once the conference had transferred to Odessa. Titov agreed with him and said that the UR would not take part in such elections at that stage. However, the UR also put forward an announcement that should elections take place, each of the three tendencies represented at the conference should be granted a place in this delegation to Paris. Bizarrely, then, the UR was in effect demanding representation in an election in

<sup>47</sup> Hoover, Vrangeli Collection, Box 36, File 16, 'Protokol 2-go soveshchaniia Russkoi Delegatsii v Iassakh s soiuznimi poslannikami v zdanii Russkago Konsul'stva', pp. 1–2.

<sup>48</sup> Gurko, 'Iz Petrograda', p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> Astrov, 'Iasskoe soveshchanie', p. 70.



which it was refusing to participate. Unsurprisingly, no UR representative was chosen at the meeting, although Bunakov-Fundaminskii did receive one vote.<sup>50</sup>

The delegates to the conference departed from Jassy having failed in any way to convince the Allied representatives to support their cause. The majority of the delegates travelled to Odessa, where the newly elected delegation to the west would wait for transportation to Constantinople. In Odessa, a smaller version of the Jassy Conference continued to meet until 6 December. It is likely that this was due to the fact that as soon as they arrived it became clear to the delegates that the town might soon fall to Petlura, who was gaining strength due to mass defections from the forces of Hetman Skoropadskii. Therefore some of the more vocal members of the conference, including Titov and Bunakov-Fundaminskii, remained with the delegation of four to discuss emergency measures, which in the earlier, better attended sessions amounted to discussions of vague hopes of an Allied landing and the need to take action to keep order in a town in danger of descending into anarchy. Such discussions were largely fruitless, involving the exchange of rumours and very little else, until the return of K. R. Krovopuskov from Constantinople (he had evidently travelled alongside General Galievskii and Colonel Novikov rather than remaining in Odessa) who made it clear in the meeting of 29 November that there was little chance of an Allied landing, his having met with General Franchet d'Esperey, who had given him little or no encouragement.<sup>51</sup> The only exception to this general theme was the meeting of 27 November, at which Titov succeeded in gaining UR representation in the delegation to Paris, an honour which was later conferred upon Titov himself.<sup>52</sup> Nothing of any other significance took place in the Odessa sessions, save for an appearance by General Grishin-Almazov, who gave a lengthy, outdated address on the situation in Siberia that ended with a speculative piece on the attitude of the Directory to the Volunteer Army and failed to inform those present of the Omsk

<sup>50</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 15', pp. 2–3. It should be noted that the minutes to these meeting appear to be fragmentary. R. H. McNeal has suggested not only that much of the debate was omitted from the minutes, but that Bunakov-Fundaminskii voted for himself, which contradicts the noted refusal of the UR to participate in the elections. See McNeal, 'The Conference of Jassy', p. 233 (n. 1).

<sup>51</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 16', pp. 1–2; 'Zhurnal No. 17', pp. 1–3; 'Zhurnal No. 19', pp. 1–3; untitled document (also in Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 36, File 15 along with all minutes of the conference) containing a short account of the meeting of 29 November, pp. 1–3. Evidently 'Zhurnal No. 20' is missing from the archive and this document was produced to replace it.

<sup>52</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 18', pp. 2–3. There has been some confusion on this subject. R. H. McNeal has suggested that there was no socialist chosen as a part of this delegation, and that it was a four-man group that departed from Odessa for Constantinople on 3 December, and that other accounts by Gurko, Astrov and Margulies were wrong. In fact, Titov was chosen and accompanied the others to Paris and London. See McNeal, pp. 233 (n. 1), 234; Gurko, pp. 51, 52–53; Astrov, p. 72.



coup.<sup>53</sup> The five-man delegation to the Allied governments sailed from Odessa on 3 December, and the final meeting of the remains of the conference was on 6 December, although the real business of the conference was long since over.<sup>54</sup>

### *The Consequences of Failure*

The failure of the Jassy conference cannot be overstated. No agreement was made with the Allied diplomats and the prospect of forging any serious links between the Volunteer Army and the Allies was not improved. Therefore, the influence of any of the three political groups who made up the conference on the policies and tactics of the Denikin regime remained negligible. All three political groups continued to exist, but their significance was less than before and the UR, in particular, was no longer any more important an organisation than any other of the plethora of regional political groupings that proliferated during this period.<sup>55</sup> The Jassy Conference was, in effect, the last time the UR was involved with anything of even the vaguest importance. No central meetings of the UR were ever held again, and the UR never played a part in any major initiative. After all, its leaders were now scattered. Avksent'ev and those who had accompanied him on the mission to the east were either in hiding or escaping from Kolchak-ruled Siberia at a time when the 'Supreme Ruler' was ruthlessly hunting down pockets of SR-led resistance. Chaikovskii was about to escape from his own isolation in Arkhangel'sk and make his way to Paris, as was Titov from South Russia. Occasionally the UR's name crops up in documents making reference to problems encountered by Denikin in a particular town in the Don or Kuban region that had traditionally supported the PSR, but such instances were few and far between.

<sup>53</sup> 'Zhurnal No. 21', pp. 2–10.

<sup>54</sup> Titov, who returned to Russia in March 1919, made a report on his time as a delegate to Paris and London, where the five sent from Jassy were joined by, among others, N. V. Chaikovskii, S. D. Sazonov and Prince G. E. L'vov, famed for his involvement in the Kornilov affair. Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 50, File 2, 'Doklad A. A. Titova', pp. 1–5 (incomplete: the text runs out). On the work of the delegation to Paris, and in particular the role of the UR leader Chaikovskii, see Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, pp. 95–137.

<sup>55</sup> A study of the propaganda of the Denikin regime mentions the UR as a constituent element (along with the National Centre and the Council for State Unity) of the collection of political organisations in Kiev after its occupation by the forces of the nationalist Ukrainian Directory. See Lazarski, C. 'White Propaganda Efforts in the South during the Russian Civil War, 1918–1919 (the Alekseev–Denikin Period)', *Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 17 (1992), p. 691.

The one major example of lower level activity on behalf of the UR has some significance in relation to the regionalist politics of South Russia that grew as a result of the hostile attitude of Volunteer Army to pre-existing local formations. This type of activity shows that although the UR and National Centre both aimed to bring moderation to the rule of the Volunteer Army and prevent the kind of despotism and corruption associated with dictatorships, the members of the two organisations had different ideas regarding the way in which this should be done. The National Centre, led of course by Astrov, worked in close contact with the Volunteer Army, within the confines of the Special Council. The UR chose to go against the National Centre, to criticise the Volunteer Army from the outside and to agitate against its methods using links with local governmental institutions. Between August and October 1918 certain SR members of the 'Zemstvo-City Union' had worked with the Volunteer Army at a time when the regime lacked administrators. However, this collaboration was short-lived, due to the fact that the generals were not interested in hearing the opinion of these SRs who had formed the 'South-East Committee' and relations between the left and the Volunteer Army broke down.<sup>56</sup> During November, the UR was gaining in popularity among local figures, and indeed it would appear that former mayor of Odessa, M. V. Braikevich, was sent to the Jassy conference as a representative of the UR.<sup>57</sup> During November, members of the Zemstvos and Towns self-governmental apparatus of the region, perhaps the very same figures who had attempted to work with Denikin during the autumn, gathered in Odessa to form a new inter-party organization to reaffirm their rights – the Council of zemstvos and towns of South Russia.<sup>58</sup>

Around the time of the end of the Odessa sessions of the Jassy Conference, the city was descending into anarchy as a general strike was threatening to undermine the administration of local Islamic leader Mustafin, who had been placed in charge of Odessa by the now displaced Hetman Skoropadskii. General Grishin-Almazov, who was just beginning to emerge onto the scene in South Russia, removed Mustafin and attempted, with the help of a few French troops, to bring order to the town in the

<sup>56</sup> Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia*, Vol. 1, p. 206.

<sup>57</sup> See above, p. 206, n. 28.

<sup>58</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago IV', *Na chuzhoi storone* No. 5 (1924) (hereafter 'Iz nedalekago proshlago IV'), pp. 264–266.



name of the Volunteer Army.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the collapse of the Skoropadskii regime brought Russian military governance to Odessa, rather than Ukrainian nationalist rule. This brought immediate opposition from the local UR, who believed such a regime would quickly lead South Russia into the hands of the Bolsheviks. The UR decided to organise a 'broad social movement' to oppose the regime. In this they found common cause with the Council of Zemstvos and Towns of South Russia and especially with Braikevich, who had of course attended one of the last sessions of the Jassy Conference in Odessa along with Grishin-Almazov. Braikevich, as head of the Odessa Town Duma, brought local governmental leaders together with the local UR to call for a change in the administration of the town. To this end, a small group, including founder member of the UR V. A. Miakotin, met with the general to put forward an alternative plan for the governance of Odessa. Grishin-Almazov, however, was unmoved by the joint UR–Duma scheme and rejected it out of hand.<sup>60</sup>

Here for the first time the UR faced open conflict with the Volunteer Army and the National Centre. Fellow founder member of the UR and Popular Socialist A. V. Peshchekhonov arrived from Ekaterinodar to warn Miakotin that the Volunteer Army, and indeed General Denikin himself, considered that all civil administration should be in the hands of the military. The Kadet V. A. Stepanov, a member of the National Centre who had also joined the UR in the spirit of the Moscow agreement, arrived to bring the Odessa UR a clear indication of the 'mood of Ekaterinodar'. He said that he no longer saw the UR plan for a coalition directory as feasible and hoped that the UR could see that the way forward was to support the dictatorship of General Denikin. When informed that the UR saw no alternative to their scheme for a provisional coalition government, Stepanov announced his resignation from the organisation. As Miakotin later put it, this signified 'a new divergence between the Union for the Regeneration of Russia and the National Centre'. This 'divergence' can also be seen from a letter from the 'All-Russian National Centre' (a title the Ekaterinodar group took to distinguish it from Shul'gin's semi-independent 'South-Russian National Centre' in Kiev) to Admiral Kolchak dated 1 January 1919, in which the organisation greeted the Supreme Ruler and gave the opinion that the

<sup>59</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago IV', pp. 267–68 contains a short account of the way in which Grishin-Almazov took power in Odessa.

<sup>60</sup> Miakotin, V.A. 'Iz nedalekago proshlago V', *Na chuzhoi storone* No. 6 (1924) (hereafter 'Iz nedalekago proshlago V'), pp. 75–76; Braikevich, M. 'Iz revoliutsii nam chto-nibud', *Na chuzhoi storone* No. 5 (1924), pp. 224–225.



admiral was quite right to seize power from the 'indecisive Ufa Directory'.<sup>61</sup> Miakotin was, however, satisfied that local Kadets (such as Braikevich) did not agree with Stepanov, and that the divisions within the UR did not go so deep as to threaten the existence of the organisation. Negotiations with the Volunteer Army did not result in any agreement, though, and soon it became apparent to the UR that the four inter-party organisations in South Russia – the UR, the National Centre, the Council for the State Unification of Russia and the Council of Zemstvos and Towns of South Russia – should organise a conference to agree a strategy for dealing with the issues raised by recent events.<sup>62</sup>

However, such a coming together was not to take place. In fact, the tensions within South Russia were to increase dramatically during January 1919. The French forces with which Grishin-Almazov had established his governance were strengthened in the middle of the month, leading many to wonder exactly what the aims of the French were. The forces seemed merely to be occupying the port rather than using it as a point of entry to fight Bolshevism on a wider front. A meeting was arranged to discuss matters between locals, including Miakotin and a representative of the local National Centre, and Colonel Freudenberg, who it seems had superseded Henno as French representative in Odessa. This meeting did not bring the two sides closer, however, and there was no undertaking to increase French intervention to a significant degree. Concern was growing that the Red Army was fast approaching from the north, and that the war would soon be over if Allied help was not forthcoming. Shul'gin, who continued to lead the 'South Russian National Centre' in Kiev, published an attack on the French in his own paper, *Rossiia*. In this article he stated that unless the Allies were prepared to assist in the recreation of the Russian state, they would be continuing the policy of Germany during its time as an occupying force. The French response was to close down *Rossiia*, a course of action that caused protest from the Odessa UR, as it now considered the town to be under dual occupation. Concern was growing that sympathy for the Bolsheviks, caused by the blinkered excesses of the Volunteer Army, was growing even among the intelligentsia of South Russia. A meeting of professional unions organised by the Council of Zemstvos and Towns of South Russia heard a report by V. V. Rudnev, which

<sup>61</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 28, File 31, untitled letter from the All-Russian National Centre to Admiral Kolchak, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago V', pp. 77–81.



expressed a lack of trust in the Volunteer Army and a clear preference for Soviet rule. Although Rudnev found the majority of those gathered before him were strongly opposed to his suggestions, his wife, a local SR, furthered his case by stating that Ekaterinodar was no different to Moscow – there was no freedom of the press and no personal freedom – and suggested that any success for the Volunteer Army was a success for reaction.<sup>63</sup>

Denikin chose to quieten the discontent by proroguing the Odessa City Duma at the end of January. In a telegram to the dissenting voices in the UR and the local self-governmental bodies, the general stated that a new organ (the Political Section) would be placed in charge to restore order. This would only be temporary, however, and after a short while new laws regarding self-government would be drawn up in Ekaterinodar. This caused a storm of protest, with even Grishin-Almazov joining the chorus of voices urging Denikin to change his mind, which he duly did. This small victory was soured, however, when the UR in Odessa read an announcement in a local paper by Astrova that, due to his participation in the Special Council, he no longer felt he could consider himself a member of the UR. Finally, what should have been apparent to the UR for some time was in print. Similarly, Miakotin found that the tactic of opposition to the Volunteer Army caused local SRs to drift away from the fold after a local party meeting decided to support Denikin as the most likely figure to conduct an efficient campaign against the Bolsheviks.<sup>64</sup> In addition, the Odessa branch of the National Centre, which held its inaugural meeting on 18 January, in the presence of members of the Ekaterinodar organisation including Fedorov, undertook to campaign vigorously on the behalf of the Volunteer Army.<sup>65</sup> There was now no connection of any kind between the moderate left and the Ekaterinodar Kadets and the understanding between the UR and the National Centre was formally over. What remained of the Odessa UR was more or less a small group of Popular Socialists and the locals who were close to Braikovich. Yet, clinging to the notion that the inter-party organisations should work together, the UR formed one final scheme for a coalition government in South Russia.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 81–84; Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 30, File 25, 'Informatsiia Odesskago otdela N. Ts. Fevrali 1919g.', pp. 1–2 contains a little information on the failed meeting with Colonel Freudenberg.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>65</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 31, File 27, untitled document on the Odessa department of the National Centre by I. Novikov, pp. 1–2.

This plan for a 'Provisional South Russian Government' came in the familiar form of a directory of three or five figures, to be formed at a state conference comprising representatives from local governments and local representative organs, as well as from the Council for the State Unification of Russia, the National Centre, the Council of Zemstvos and Towns of South Russia, the UR, professional unions, co-operatives, trade and industry groups, and political parties. This plan was sufficiently detailed to outline the number of representatives each group was to provide for the state conference, as well as the limits of the authority of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces in relation to those of this new directory. The commander-in-chief was to concern himself with military matters only. All governmental business was to be conducted by the directory – implying, of course, that the commander-in-chief, who would of course have been Denikin, would not be a member of this collegial government.<sup>66</sup> These plans were furthered by those made for a South Russian Federation, which went into more detail regarding the role of the directory, and those made for a government of the Kuban, working as a part of the federation.<sup>67</sup> This final UR project came as a result of negotiations between the UR and representatives of the three other organisations, including L. E. El'iatsev and P. P. Iurenev of the National Centre. Progress on this project was, it seems, terminally slow. Slow enough, in fact, for the returning Titov and Krovopuskov to attend a session on 25 March. The negotiations ended in a further break between the UR and the National Centre, as a result of a declaration issued by the latter organisation's leaders in Ekaterinodar (perhaps inspired by an order of the Special Council) as the intelligence service of the Volunteer Army, Azbuka, kept the powers in Ekaterinodar informed of these meetings. This attempt to build a new consensus behind a South Russian directory was the last act of the UR in Odessa before its members fled the advancing forces of the Red Army at the end of March.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Hoover Institution, Nikolaevsky Collection, Box 8, File 30, 'Proekt S.V.R', pp. 1–2, 'Proekt o gosudarstvennom soveshchanii', pp. 1–3, 'Osnoviia prava chlena direktorii – verkhovnago glavnokomanduiushago vsemi voorushennimi silami na iuge Rossii' (sic.), pp. 1–3.

<sup>67</sup> Hoover Institution, Nikolaevsky Collection, Box 8, File 30, 'Proekt Vremmennago Osnovnogo Polozheniia o Iuzhno-russkoi federatsii', pp. 1–4, 'Proekt Kubanskago Pravitel'stva', pp. 1–6. See also Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 176.

<sup>68</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago' V, pp. 88–93; Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 30, File 28, 'Azbuka Odessa 5 fevralia/23 ianvaria', p. 2.



## *The Death Throes of the Anti-Bolshevik Underground*

If, as S. P. Mel'gunov suggested many years ago, 'the Omsk events of November 1918 did not break up the Union of Regeneration', then they certainly left it to die a slow death, together with the National Centre. Both organisations had continued to exist in Moscow under the leadership of N. N. Shchepkin, who had remained a member of both organisations, even though it is likely that he had been informed that Astrov and Stepanov had left the UR. Moscow was in constant communication with Ekaterinodar – many telegrams, often partially encoded, were sent between the two centres, Shchepkin who was of course still in hiding, using the code name 'Uncle Kola'. These telegrams usually contained little more than information on current events, however – there was little opportunity to engage in debate.<sup>69</sup> When Shchepkin had something of substance to communicate to the south, his information was usually out of date. A good example of this, which clearly demonstrates the isolation of those in Moscow from the events of the civil war, is a telegram dated December 31st 1918, in which, ten weeks after the Kolchak coup, Shchepkin informed Astrov that the Ufa Directory urgently required him to make the journey to Siberia to take up his post in government.<sup>70</sup> The two organisations continued to meet, although Shchepkin later described Moscow during this entire period as 'politically dead'.<sup>71</sup> During the period of late 1918 and early 1919 the National Centre in Moscow mainly discussed nationalities issues relating to Finland and Poland – again showing that they were out of step, as it was of course Ukraine that occupied the mind of every National Centre member in the south.<sup>72</sup>

The UR had continued to meet also, its membership being boosted (after the mass exodus of members) by the arrival of figures such as the historian S. P. Mel'gunov, A. N. Potresov and A. Nikolaevich, who had previously been a member of the Petrograd organisation. As the membership was small, and it was often difficult to meet, few meetings were in fact held. Perhaps for this reason the members of both the National Centre and the UR in Moscow began to talk of unifying the organisations in early 1919.<sup>73</sup> This may well appear curious, as by this time the UR and National

<sup>69</sup> Examples of these telegrams can be found in Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 33, Files 32, 33 and Box 49, file 22.

<sup>70</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 50, File 9, 'Soobshchenie iz Moskvi', p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> 'Istoricheskaiia spravka N. N. Shchepkina', *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*, p. 198.

<sup>72</sup> Kotliarevskii, S. A. "Natsional'nii tsentr" v Moskve v 1918 g., *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*, p. 141.

<sup>73</sup> 'Pokazaniia S. P. Mel'gunova', *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*, pp. 290–294.



Centre had never been further apart in the south. In fact, when the Allies, apparently on the suggestion of President Wilson, invited representatives of Russian political groups to meet on the island of Prinkipo to try to form some consensus, the 'All-Russian National Centre' constructed a lengthy reply explaining why they had decided to decline the invitation. Recounting their experiences of such attempts, from the Moscow State Conference of August 1917 onwards, the Ekaterinodar leaders of the organisation gave their opinion that such a conference would not yield any practical results.<sup>74</sup> When the Moscow-based members disagreed, the Ekaterinodar group attempted to persuade them to change their minds and boycott the conference, informing them that not only Kolchak and Denikin, but Chaikovskii too had spoken out against the initiative.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless the conference did go ahead in early March, with Shchepkin, Mel'gunov, S. A. Kotliarevskii, S. E. Trubetskoi and several others in attendance, including at later sessions, Titov and Krovopuskov, who were en route to South Russia from their trip to Paris and London. The majority of the discussion was fairly low-level, characteristic of a conference comprised solely of delegates who were out of touch with key events. Agreements were made, for example, that a commander-in-chief should not exercise any authority outside the normal jurisdiction of the military, that preparations should be made for elections to a constituent assembly, and that the authority in power should work hard to address the agrarian question by establishing productive rural relations in a way that would benefit all classes.<sup>76</sup> As a result of this conference, the Moscow branches of the UR, the National Centre and the Council of Moscow Social Activists formed a new organisation, the Tactical Centre, in April. The Tactical Centre contained the above-mentioned delegates to Prinkipo (excluding Titov and Krovopuskov) and was, of course, as isolated and ineffective as its composite organisations were before.<sup>77</sup>

The All-Russian National Centre, as the main organisation now called itself, was now more of a uniform Kadet group than ever before, once all links with the moderate left had been severed. Indeed, even correspondence with Shchepkin seems

<sup>74</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 28, File 33, 'Vserossiiskii natsional'nyi tsentr o soveshchaniia na Printsevikh ostrovakh', pp. 1–6.

<sup>75</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 50, File 9, 'Soobshchenie natsional'nogo tsentra v Moskvu', pp. 1–4.

<sup>76</sup> 'Ot "Soiuzna vozrozhdeniia Rossii" i "Natsional'nogo tsentra"', *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*, pp. 217–219; '10-e Zasedanie biuro chetirekh organizatsii: "Soveta gosudarstvennogo ob"edineniia", "Natsional'nogo tsentra", "Soiuzna vozrozhdeniia", i "Soveta zemstv i gorodov iuga Rossii"', *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*, p. 222.

<sup>77</sup> Leont'ev, S. M. 'Takticheskii tsentr', *Krasnaia Kniga VChK*, pp. 205–211.



to have ground to a halt. Generally speaking, the Kadets met once every week or two under the chairmanship of Fedorov to discuss the latest developments. On one occasion, Titov of the UR gave an account of his rather frustrating experiences in Paris and London, immediately after his return – in fact, it would appear that Titov was making something of a whistle-stop tour, as he met the National Centre in Ekaterinodar on the same day (or the day after) he met with Miakotin and the UR in Odessa.<sup>78</sup> Other meetings generally followed a similar pattern. The National Centre was now a small group, comprising mainly of Kadets, whose influence over the Volunteer Army was negligible by this stage. Discussions on safe subjects such as foreign relations and the events surrounding the Versailles Peace Conference took up as much, if not more, time as events inside Russia. When the civil war was discussed, the focus tended to be more on events in Siberia and the military fortunes of Admiral Kolchak or on the prospect of foreign intervention than the politics of the south. For example, the meeting of 26 April 1919 discussed the admittance of new members before moving on to the arrival in Ekaterinodar of General Milner to negotiate with Denikin about ways in which Britain could help the Volunteer Army. This type of discussion, though, was very much an exchange of information. No actual policies were debated – this was an organisation that knew its place, and was aware that it had little influence. At the next meeting, on 20 April, the group heard a report by General Flug on the history and conduct of the anti-Bolshevik movement in Siberia. One political point was made at this meeting, by Astrov on the agrarian question, but the issue was not fully debated and other than making the point that the Volunteer Army was paying too little attention to rural issues, even Astrov had little to say.<sup>79</sup> The next session was held on 2 May, with Miakotin and Titov as guests, although Titov made but one brief point in a discussion on finance and Miakotin said nothing.<sup>80</sup> The pair also met with former UR brethren Astrov, Stepanov and Iurenev, who again stressed

<sup>78</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 32, File 34, 'Vserossiiskii natsionalnii tsentr: Zhurnal zasedanii pravleniia No. 2', pp. 1–10. This account is much the same as that mentioned above, p. 158, n. 54.

<sup>79</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 28, File 18, 'Vserossiiskii natsional'nii tsentr', 'Zhurnal No. 20, Ekaterinodar 12/26 apreliia 1919 goda' and 'Zhurnal No. 21, Ekaterinodar 20 apreliia 1919 goda'.

<sup>80</sup> Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 28, File 18, 'Vserossiiskii natsional'nii tsentr', 'Zhurnal No. 23', pp. 1–5.



the need for a dictatorship. This led the two UR leaders to seek, and obtain, an audience with Denikin himself, which did nothing to further their aims.<sup>81</sup>

The numbers at National Centre meetings began to dwindle, with even Astrov failing to appear after 18 May, and the meetings themselves more and more brief as the significance of the National Centre, like the UR and indeed the Kadet Party itself, shrank to practically nothing.<sup>82</sup> That these organisations had come to absolute zero was clear for all to see when, on 18 June, representatives of the UR, the National Centre and the Council for the State Unification of Russia met in the Ekaterinodar town theatre to speak on Denikin's announcement of 12 June to submit to the authority of Kolchak as Supreme Ruler of the Russian State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. A telegram signed by Miakotin, Fedorov and Krivoshein on behalf of the three organisations and sent to both Denikin and Kolchak expressed no less than joy at the unifying of the command and proclaimed their misguided faith that the Supreme Ruler would reunite Russia and take it to liberation and to a new Constituent Assembly.<sup>83</sup> The UR and the National Centre had given up. The significance of the supremacy of Kolchak in the anti-Bolshevik camp was not lost on the remaining members of the two organisations. Their work was done. What little remained of the UR and the National Centre was soon killed off. As the Denikin regime in South Russia was forced to retreat, it began to falter and the increasingly misguided (or unguided) general closed the Special Council. Added to this, one final blow for Astrov came in the news that the Moscow National Centre had fallen. August and September 1919 saw the arrest of all the members of the Moscow underground by the Cheka and many (including Shchepkin and two of Astrov's brothers) were shot. Sovnarkom attempted to justify this action in reports by Kamenev in *Izvestiia* on 9 and 12 October which grossly exaggerated the threat of the underground to Soviet power.<sup>84</sup> Mel'gunov later wrote of the work of the UR during

<sup>81</sup> Miakotin, V. A. 'Iz nedalekago proshlago', *Na chuzhoi storone*, No. 9 (1925) (hereafter 'Iz nedalekago proshlago VI', pp. 284–88.

<sup>82</sup> 'Vserossiiskii natsional'nyi tsentr', 'Zhurnal No. 29', pp. 1–2 gives the clearest indication of this. This meeting, held on 15 June, lasted less than two hours and the minutes barely fill two pages.

<sup>83</sup> Miakotin, 'Iz nedalekago proshlago VI', pp. 299–300.

<sup>84</sup> Mel'gunov-Stepanova, P. 'Ubitie v 1919 godu: Razstrel'annie v Moskve po delu Natsional'nago Tsentra', in Astrov, N. I., Zeelev, V. F., Miliukov, P. N., Obolenskii, V. A., Smirnov, S. A., El'iashev, L. E. (eds.), *Pamiati pogibshikh*. Paris: Société Nouvelle d'Etons Franco-Slaves, 1929, pp. 74–83; Hoover Institution, Vrangeli Collection, Box 50, File 6, 'Doklad komitetu oboroni g. Moskvi o voennom zagovor', pp. 1–5 contains the text of Kamenev's report of 9 October; Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, pp. 430–431.



this very last period of its life, during which Miakotin and Titov had been rejoined by Chaikovskii,

The activity of the union to this time (autumn 1919) did not have, as recognised by V. A. Miakotin, 'particularly great success'; the union remained, in the opinion of General Denikin, a fairly isolated group, cut off from socialist parties and from bourgeois society.<sup>85</sup>

Sadly, for those involved, this had in fact been the case for the whole of 1919.

<sup>85</sup> Mel'gunov, *N. V. Chaikovskii*, p. 181.

## Conclusion

The researching and writing of this thesis came about as the result of a desire to investigate the nature of anti-Bolshevik politics, not in the context of the mainstream opposition parties (which have received broad coverage in the historiography of the revolution and civil war), but by focusing on smaller, less well-known, but often equally as significant inter-party or non-party groups which had connections with other social organisations and whose formation, as is shown in the introductory chapter, had roots in the fractious political climate of 1917. It became clear through researching into the subject that those who became involved in 'the anti-Bolshevik underground' believed that Russia's party-political system had failed in 1917. It emerged too that the underground rapidly concluded, in the spring of 1918, a time when the Bolsheviks were ruthlessly removing all vestiges of political pluralism and when the only solution appeared to be armed conflict, that political and military opposition would not be well served by those whose actions and alliances were restricted by narrow party doctrine. Of the many organisations whose names are encountered in memoirs and secondary accounts, a unifying aim appeared: to organise the anti-Bolshevik struggle in such a manner that it became a campaign not on the behalf of one or another sector of Russian society, not in the name of any particular political beliefs and not for the sake of any regional or national aspirations, but as a united reaction on the behalf of the entire Russian population against what they saw as an illegal seizure of power by a small party of extremists whom it was believed were damaging the standing of Russia as a great power. The anti-Bolshevik underground, then, coalesced from a number of fragments. Likewise, the evidence utilised to detail its history has been a series of fragments: resolutions, minutes of meetings, scraps of memoirs, letters and notes. It is hoped that what has been gathered here demonstrates that the anti-Bolshevik underground can be seen as a single subject, and that a common theme can be discerned throughout: the attempt by those disparate elements that constituted the underground to bring the military and political dimensions of the anti-Bolshevik camp together in order more successfully to prosecute the war against Soviet power.

A number of assumptions have been made in the framing of this thesis, notably the fact that although many of the figures who entered into one or another



underground group were right-wing monarchists, the political reality of 1918 was that Russia had been radicalised as a result of the tumultuous events of 1917. Any successful campaign against Soviet power would necessarily be forced to deal with the fact that the peasant masses had seized the land of their former landowners, control of industry was no longer in the hands a wealthy minority but in the hands of workers, and that the only way of defeating the Red Army would be to develop a political strategy to win over at least some of them. In short, the old regime would not be saved by those members of the Imperial Army who remained loyal to it. Those who were determined to put an end to Bolshevik rule needed to come to some arrangement with representatives of socialism. The Union of Regeneration was therefore chosen as the focus of this study because of its connections with the PSR and the Popular Socialists and its desire to work with representatives of non-socialist parties and the military. The roots of the Union of Regeneration were in a kind of SR-parliamentarianism and its most prominent members, such as N. D. Avksent'ev, A. A. Argunov, and N. V. Chaikovskii, were socialists who were also Westernisers whose experiences in exile in France or Great Britain before the revolution had led them to believe that a similar political system could work in their own country. In this respect they had far more in common with the Constitutional Democrats, a party led by another Westerniser, P. N. Miliukov, than they had with the radical revolutionary socialism of Lenin, Chernov or Martov. Of course, Miliukov had proven himself incapable of working with those to his left in 1917, and in fact the revolutionary period caused the Kadet Party to fragment in a similar way to the PSR. For this reason, the unofficial leader of the more progressive wing of the Kadets, N. I. Astrov, was a more significant figure in the Russian Civil War than his erstwhile party leader. It was only natural that the moderate socialism of Avksent'ev and his fellow SRs should form an alliance with the left-liberalism of Astrov. Astrov in a sense legitimised the UR for many more right-wing Kadets by associating with it and by joining the organisation.

The disastrous effect upon Russia's political parties of 1917, then, led to the formation of several inter-party groups, of which the Union of Regeneration and the National Centre emerged as the two most significant. After their negotiations in the late spring of 1918, the two formed an agreement regarding the unification of the anti-Bolshevik camp under a single banner, led by a three-man 'Directory' that would act as a collegiate dictatorship. This agreement meant that the two organisations, working



in tandem to bring in representatives of other organisations, posed a serious threat to Bolshevism. At best the National Centre could deliver the support of the Volunteer Army in the South, with General Alekseev the organisation's preferred candidate as a non-party Director and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The UR could, via its links with the PSR and the co-operative movement, provide the Directory with credibility among the masses and formulate policies that would appeal to workers and peasants. Of course, the two groups had been rapidly and loosely formed, and they lacked strict organisational discipline. The alliance between the two had been made equally loosely and there was no real commitment to a long-term future plan. The westernising SRs in this alliance naturally looked forward to a time when the Constituent Assembly was sovereign, although they never seemed certain whether that should be the assembly elected in 1917, or whether victory over the Red Army should be followed by fresh elections. The National Centre preferred not to think about that at all, as Russian liberalism had suffered a great defeat in the polls in November 1917, and they simply denied its authority, focussing on the task in hand – to provide political support for a strong military-oriented regime concerned only with victory. The spoils of war would be apportioned later.

The fact that the two organisations practically went their separate ways in June 1918, with the UR heading east and the National Centre moving to South Russia, suggests that there was too little faith in this alliance formed between the two groups, and that each hoped that they would be the more successful. The National Centre, after leaving Moscow, concerned itself with the Volunteer Army, and seemed to be not particularly interested in the fortunes of the UR in its attempts to arrange a state conference that would create an all-Russian government according to the plans made in Moscow. For their part, members of the UR probably thought that an Allied incursion into Russia via Arkhangel'sk would help them to create a new eastern front, behind which would be the SR-heartland of the Upper Volga, and that the success of this intervention would give them hegemony in the anti-Bolshevik camp. Had the two organisations acted in a more unified manner, they might have had more success. General Alekseev had already had contact with Savinkov and Argunov in early 1918, and the presence of a UR delegation in South Russia might have brought more unity between the south and the east. Similarly, had Lev Krol not been the sole Kadet working for the cause of the Moscow agreement in the east, the task of winning over local Kadets and other non-party figures might have been easier. As it was, the efforts



of the UR appeared to many (particularly in Siberia) as another attempt by SRs to subjugate all to their party. The potential strength of the two allied groups, then, never came to fruition as a result of this 'go it alone' strategy, and before either organisation even began work, they had made a crucial mistake: allowing the geographical distance between the two anti-Bolshevik zones to assume an even greater significance than could have been the case. According to Krol, the action of both centres was intended to be 'co-ordinated', though it is clear that there was no real co-ordination at all between the efforts in South Russia and those in the north and the east.<sup>1</sup>

The failure of the Allies to intervene in June meant that General Boldyrev's plan for a new eastern front would never come to realisation. It also doomed to failure the uprisings in and around Iaroslavl by Savinkov's Union for the Defence of the Fatherland and Freedom. However, as is shown in Chapter Two, the belief in significant Allied intervention was based on unreliable promises by Allied agents who were acting on their own initiative and without full official sanction. It is clear with hindsight that the UR and Savinkov's Union both clung to this misguided belief in a manner out of all proportion with reality. It is clear too, from the plans made by the UR, that its leaders believed that the only salvation for their cause was an Allied intervention and that without it, they knew that they had little or no chance of success. That belief was demonstrated most clearly by Chaikovskii, who remained in North Russia even after the Chaplin coup had put an end to his short-lived, isolated regime in Arkhangel'sk. The failure of the initial plans made in Moscow should have put an end to the UR, which had no real armed forces of its own apart from a small number of officers. However, the UR's plans had never anticipated the massive impact of the revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion upon the civil war. It was only the involvement of the Czechs that provided the Bolsheviks with any serious opposition during 1918, preventing further consolidation of Soviet power and driving the limits of the Red zone well back into European Russia. It was this and this alone that allowed the emergence of two rival anti-Bolshevik authorities, Komuch and the Provisional Siberian Government, and provided the UR with a new mission: to unite the anti-Bolshevik forces of the east.

It is for this 'plan B', the arrangement of a State Conference to bring together representatives of the plethora of regional governments and to create a single

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<sup>1</sup> Krol, *Za tri goda*, p. 29.



authority to conduct the war in tandem with the Allies that the UR will be remembered. Similarly, it is the instability and ultimate failure of the Directory for which it will be always, at least in part, be held responsible. The months of July and August can easily be seen as the time when the UR was at its most effective. This was a period which saw the UR successfully bring to the negotiating table both representatives of Komuch (a government characterised by the fact that the vast majority of its members were Chernovite SRs who were dogmatic in their belief in the supreme authority of the Constituent Assembly of 1917) and those of the far more conservative Provisional Siberian Government (who held the Assembly of 1917 in disdain). Considering the enmity between the two governments, displayed quite clearly by the disastrous first conference at Cheliabinsk, the efforts of Avksent'ev and his allies seem impressive indeed. It must be remembered, however, that even this success was due in a large part to factors outside the control of the UR, such as the successes of the Czechoslovak Legion in liberating more of European Russia. The Second Cheliabinsk Conference came shortly after the capture of Kazan, and with the UR seemingly supported by the leaders of the Legion, it must have seemed to Avksent'ev and his associates that with this muscle behind them, they could force some kind of agreement, particularly as local representatives of the Allies such as British Consul Preston and French military attaché Major Guinet were adding their voices to those of the Czechs in supporting the creation of a single authority. It must also be remembered that this apparent success masked the fact that a crucial struggle was raging in Siberia between the increasingly reactionary PSG, led by its Minister of Finance I. A. Mikhailov, and the SR-dominated Sibobduma. The bloody climax of this struggle, the Novoselov murder, in which Mikhailov was clearly implicated, rendered any achievements that were made at the Ufa State Conference virtually irrelevant.

By the time of the Ufa State Conference, the momentum behind the UR had already begun to fade. The arrangement of the conference, again, could be seen as a great achievement. However, the length of time it took for the Siberian delegation to arrive and its intransigence upon arrival revealed that the PSG had little more than contempt for the UR and the aim to create an all-Russian coalition government. As the most crucial sessions of the conference were meeting, the Red Army was advancing towards Samara, placing Komuch under serious threat, and Vologodskii was in the Far East conducting a series of meetings with representatives of the Allies, the Derber government and the Horvath administration in order to secure the position



of the PSG with regard to the east. The UR had no real allies with whom to impress the main delegations. Crucially, there was no National Centre representation at the conference giving the UR the appearance of being little more than a small gang of Right-SRs, who could not promise that their proposed coalition government would have any military power at all, as, without the National Centre, there was no link to South Russia and the Volunteer Army, and there was still no sign of significant Allied intervention or a guarantee of Allied recognition for the future government. The Siberian delegation to the conference, led by Serebrennikov and Sapozhnikov, were not under any real pressure to reach a compromise. However, they were heavily outnumbered at Ufa and understandably felt isolated, which made them less sure of their position, particularly as the news of the Novoselov murder came to Ufa and the outcome of the affair was unclear. The combination of these factors made the Siberians more amenable towards reaching a compromise, albeit one which they probably hoped that they would never have to honour. Meanwhile, the precarious position of Samara had caused many of the leading Komuch members to return to their capital, leaving Gendel'man to offer concessions regarding the Constituent Assembly that he had not been given the authority to make (and for which he was later severely criticised by Černov). As a result the well-known agreement was made which allowed for the closure, albeit temporarily, of the assembly. This agreement, together with the fudging of more difficult issues such as the dissolution of regional governments, the transfer of power to the Directory and the election of members and deputy members of the Directory, meant that the Ufa State Conference, while successful in creating an all-Russian government, must be seen not as a 'triumph' for the UR but as a fatal blow to the so-called 'democratic counter-revolution'.

The compromises reached at Ufa had little to do with the efforts of Avksent'ev and his friends, but were due mainly to the unauthorised initiatives of Gendel'man and the insecurities felt by the Siberians in the wake of the Novoselov affair. These compromises pleased nobody and, together with the fateful decision to move the seat of the all-Russian government to Omsk, meant that the outcome of the Ufa State Conference was exactly what the absent Vologodskii had hoped it to be: the way was open for the PSG to assume the functions of an all-Russian government.

The Directory was doomed from the outset – not least because the UR had clearly broken the agreement with the National Centre made in Moscow. Not only was the Directory too large, and its membership numerically dominated by the UR, its



responsibilities to the existing Constituent Assembly and its constitutional requirement to rule by governmental department meant that the all-Russian government was far from being a collegiate dictatorship. This was to be government by discussion, a throwback to the Provisional Government of 1917 and something the National Centre had clearly and specifically wished to avoid when negotiating with the UR in Moscow during the spring of 1918. Moreover, the SRs of Komuch – or, to be more precise, of the newly-formed Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly, in which Chernov took an active role – were almost unanimously opposed to the concessions made by Gendel'man and were almost immediately outspoken in their criticism of the new government. Had Kolchak not arrived on the scene, it is likely that the Directory would have been deposed by the reactionary forces of Omsk in any case. The fact that the Omsk coup was accepted so readily, with little more than a whimper of complaint by the Congress of Members of the Constituent Assembly and with no response at all from either Astrova in South Russia or Chaikovskii in North Russia reveals how tiny the Directory's power base was. One might even speculate that the only reason Avksent'ev and Zenzinov escaped with their lives on 18 November is that Kolchak and the coup-makers knew that there was no prospect of anyone coming to fight in their name (not least because Avksent'ev had refused point-blank to use the Czechs to combat the military conspiracy raging in Omsk almost from the moment that the Directory had arrived there). That decision, not even to use the (non-Russian) forces at Avksent'ev's disposal, did not condemn the Directory. It was a decision made in the knowledge that the game was already up. The violent, seedy capital of western Siberia had seen no political stability during 1918 and it was only the final victory of rightist militarism that put an end to the series of *coups d'état* that had been a feature of Siberian politics since the revolt of the Czechoslovak Legion. In its creation of an all-Russian government, the Union of Regeneration had done nothing more than pave the way for the Kolchak dictatorship and had itself helped to stifle the 'Democratic Counter-Revolution'.

The Omsk coup essentially put an end to the effective work of the anti-Bolshevik underground. The refusal of Astrova to accept his post in the Directory had revealed that the alliance forged between his National Centre and the UR had been only the vaguest of associations. There was likewise very little common cause between the National Centre and the few members of the UR who were present in South Russia. No real attempt was made to carry out the plans made in Moscow for



the creation of a government to work alongside the Volunteer Army; and in fact Astrov ended up accepting a post on Denikin's Special Council, an advisory body with no power whatsoever and certainly without any representative of socialism. There were a number of other organisations in existence in South Russia that had roots in the Moscow underground, most notably the Council for the State Unification of Russia, which was dominated by former members of the Right Centre such as S. N. Tret'iakov and V. I. Gurko. By early autumn the majority of these rightists had abandoned their German orientation, as clearly Germany was about to lose the war. In fact, the middle of November 1918 was a period which marked a great change in the Russian Civil War, with the Omsk coup occurring just one week after the armistice. The defeat of Germany, together with the change to a conservative, military regime in Siberia, transformed the civil war into a war of reaction against Bolshevism, rather than a patriotic movement against the twin foes of Lenin and the Kaiser. As it had been opposition to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that had galvanised the anti-Bolshevik underground into action, the original reason for a coalition of centre-right and moderate leftist forces had disappeared. In addition to this, of course, the motivation for Allied intervention had also practically vanished, as the fight against Soviet power was now essentially transformed into a domestic issue, concerning Russia alone. No longer was the plight of Russia a major concern in world affairs, as it had been in the context of the First World War.

It was against the background of these momentous events that the Jassy conference gathered. This was the final chance for representatives of the centre, the moderate left and the right wings of Russia's political spectrum to express their view of how the civil war should best be conducted, in the hope that the Allied representatives in Jassy would be sufficiently impressed to urge their respective governments to assist them in a way that might have led to General Denikin being more interested in listening to political advice. Yet again, though, it was the debates on what form a government of anti-Bolshevik Russia should take that the Russians failed to resolve. Despite the precariousness of their situation, the various delegations were unable to come to any compromise over this issue, robbed as they were of their common, unifying desire to rid their country of German occupation. Ultimately, the conference (which took far too long in its deliberations anyway) could only produce the vaguest of documents for the Allied emissaries to peruse. The Jassy Conference did nothing, then, other than to prove that there was no possibility of a broad coalition

of political forces uniting under a common platform to give the White movement a more progressive dimension. As 1918 came to an end, the first phase of the civil war was well and truly over – 1919 was to be the year of Kolchak and Denikin. As the war was now a straight battle between the Red and White armies, there was no real role for the UR, the National Centre or the other groups to play, and it is unsurprising that the movement fizzled out in early 1919, even before the remainder of their Moscow-based membership was arrested and executed.

It can be said of the UR (and the anti-Bolshevik underground in general) that the reason for its failure could be traced to its very nature, its very origins. The UR was the ghost of the Russian government of 1917 haunting the political framework of 1918. It was a throwback to the Provisional Government led by Kerensky attempting to establish itself in the context of civil war. Avksent'ev himself was little more than a second-rate Kerensky, a man who placed all hope in his ability to persuade others towards his point of view by using a combination of flattery and sophisticated language to obscure the fact that there was no common cause between himself and those with whom he was dealing.<sup>2</sup> His attempts to gather support for his Directory in Omsk by impressing the PSG led him to abandon his natural allies, the SRs of both Komuch and the Sibobduma, and to force them to disperse. This suicidal tactic mirrors the way in which Kerensky attempted to cling onto power in the aftermath of the Kornilov Affair. The UR was by far the most significant anti-Bolshevik underground organisation, in that it alone attempted to have a direct influence upon the course of the Russian Civil War. The National Centre and the other more rightist groups were more content with the dominance of the military over the counter-revolution and consequently acted as little more than discussion groups with pretensions to being advisory bodies. Ultimately, however, discussion and debate were all that these groups, composed almost exclusively of members of the intelligentsia, were good for.

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<sup>2</sup> There is no better depiction of this aspect of Avksent'ev than that given by G. K. Guins in his memoir. See Guins, *Sibir*, p. 256.



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